College and Ordination Addresses

by

Forbes Robinson

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COLLEGE AND ORDINATION ADDRESSES

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ADDRESSES

BY

FORBES ROBINSON

LATE FELLOW OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWELL

EDITED BY

CHARLES H. ROBINSON

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PREFACE.

THE addresses contained in this volume were for the most part delivered to Cambridge undergraduates in the chapel of Christ's or of Emmanuel College. The last five were given to ordination candidates for the diocese of Southwell to the bishop of which the writer acted as an examining chaplain.

To some readers the treatment of several of the questions which form the subject of these addresses will appear slight or superficial, but it should be remembered that they were delivered to a special audience and that their meaning would have been to a large extent interpreted by the known personality of the speaker. It is in order to enable those to whom he was not known to enter into the meaning of the thoughts expressed in this volume that a few notes are here added in regard to Forbes Robinson's life and especially in regard to his work amongst undergraduates at Cambridge.

Forbes Robinson was born in 1867. He was educated at Liverpool College and at Rossall, and entered Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1887. He took his degree in the Theological and Moral Science Triposes, and after gaining five University prizes was elected a Fellow of his College and theological lecturer. He was in residence at Cambridge till the summer of 1903, when he became too ill to

continue his work. He passed away on 7th February, 1904. The following brief references to his influence at Cambridge are selected from a large number of similar statements contained in letters recently addressed to the editor of this volume.

One who left Cambridge about eight years ago writes :—

"I loved Forbes, and with all who knew him I mourn. He stands out in my life amongst the few great souls whom I have met, who have had the greatest influence on my life. To me it was his saintliness which appealed most, he was human and understood men in a marked degree, yet his elevation of character carried one at once into the regions of spirituality. Always one went forth from his presence feeling that Heaven was nearer and life more precious. His life was prayer and one felt this. I cannot realise that we shall not see him again here. To me he lives and will ever live."

Another, who was a contemporary of his at Christ's, writes :—

"He impressed me more than did any of my Cambridge friends, and when I ask myself why I left Cambridge a better and a stronger being than when I entered it, I find my answer in the life and prayers of Forbes. His love for men was amazing. He was thoroughly cosmopolitan in his friendships, and he had a wonderful faculty of drawing out the best that was in one. He helped me to realise something of the value of good solid reading, and he gave me a certain sense of self-respect, which I was lacking in. I know that I clung to him unknown to him, and I think that he loved me with the love of a brother."

Another who did not belong to his College, but who knew him intimately during the last two or three years, writes :—

"The more I think the more I feel that everything I owe to Forbes. Hardly a thought ever comes to me which I do not owe to him more or less directly. I cannot conceive what life would have been without knowing him. It was his superb rejection of all the ordinary standards which attracted me first, and which enabled him, 'born to be a saint,' to become one. The ordinary and conventional ideas of holiness and what is enough for a man to attain, could never satisfy him. He was always reaching higher, and although he talked and wrote constantly of the highest things, the reality of them was always with him. He never said anything which he did not feel at the moment, I think. In getting to know him one seemed to learn more of oneself; I mean to say that certain things which I should never have revealed to any one, he discovered, and what is more, he interpreted. It was his wonderful sympathy which enabled him to see into people. Feelings which did not seem to answer to anything in other people meant something and were intelligible to him. I was brought up in an evangelical family and the ways of people of that estimable school. What Forbes never did, so far as I am aware, was to pray with men alone, but he did what was more. To go out of his presence was simply to find yourself praying with a reality which you had never known before. You came away with the certainty that the unseen Lord still walks and moves among men."

A few months ago a volume, containing a short memoir and some of his letters, was printed for private circulation under the title, *Letters to his Friends*.[1] It has not been

[1] This volume has been printed for private circulation at the request of personal friends. Copies can be supplied (price 2/6, post free) to any who specially desire to obtain them on application to Canon C. H. Robinson, Hill Brow, Woking.

thought desirable that that volume should be published, but with the consent of the Rev. D. B. Kittermaster, there is here reproduced a short sketch of his impressions of Forbes Robinson, as he appeared to undergraduates, which was written for that volume. The sketch will throw light upon many of the suggestions contained in the sermons, more especially upon those which deal with the subject of prayer.

Mr. Kittermaster writes :—

"Forbes Robinson did not regard any one of us as a 'mere undergraduate,' one of a mass; that was the first thing which those of us who knew him as undergraduates learnt. He was genuinely interested from the first in his undergraduate acquaintances; interested in them as men, not as promising pupils, not as likely scholars, not as athletes, not as material for 'improving' influence, but as men—individuals, each possessing a separate and distinct human personality, and therefore of the truest and deepest interest to him.

"Our public schools taught us (and for most of us Cambridge continued the teaching) that to be of any real importance and consequence among his fellows a man must be 'good at games,' or perhaps—but this more rarely —'good at work'. Such is the simple creed of the undergraduate. If he satisfies neither of the above requirements, then he recognises, with greater or less sadness, that he is an ordinary man, the 'average undergraduate'. He is one of the crowd if he has no athletic powers to commend him to the notice of his fellows *in statu pupillari;* he is one of the crowd if he has no slightest hope of making for himself any name in the intellectual world, to commend him to the leaders of thought at Cambridge. And this knowledge is to many a Cambridge boy, playing at being a man, a matter of real, if unconfessed, grief.

"But 'there is no such thing as the average man, or at least as the average undergraduate'. This was the belief which Forbes Robinson held with increasing conviction as his life went on. And it was this belief which accounted to some extent for the very large part which his friendship undoubtedly played in the life of many a Cambridge undergraduate.

"For a man condemned by his fellows and himself to the position of the 'ordinary man' found himself in the presence of Forbes (as all of us universally called him) to be no such thing. Gradually and with genuine surprise he learned from him—not by any definite word of teaching—that though it might cost him efforts painful and many to get the better of his 'special,' and though athletic fame knew him not at all, yet the possibilities of his own peculiar personal life were wonderful and great. For here was one who compelled men by his genuine unaffected interest in their lives and work to be themselves genuinely interested in them too. A man could not know Forbes for long and not be quickly conscious of a new sense of the value of himself, which made him believe that his own personality and life were things of great importance. For 'he is interested in me' is what almost every man felt from the start of his acquaintance with Forbes. 'He is interested in me' we felt when he passed us in the street with his quaint humorous smile of recognition; we felt the same when we entered his room, to be received often without a word but with the same half-smile: we felt the same again if we knew that he was watching the progress of a football match or boat race in which we were taking part. And 'he is interested in me'—most wonderful of all—we felt as we listened to him in the lecture-room, and were compelled to attention; for his interest in the men in front of

him, coupled with his interest in his subject, forced us all —pass men and honours men alike—to listen to the history of Church and Doctrine and Creeds. It was this unfeigned interest in men, simply as men, that in the first instance gave him the influence which he certainly exercised over all sorts of men, including the kind of men whom the majority of their fellows disregarded, or perhaps despised; 'the babes and sucklings of the undergraduate world,' to quote another. Such men, in whom most of us could find little to attract us, were to him vastly interesting—interesting for their simple human personality.

"Some men perhaps never discovered from what source his interest in them sprang. They knew that their views of the possibilities of their own life were enlarged, that they believed in themselves more for having been with him; but it was not all at once that they discovered the reason of his interest and belief in them. It was due to the Christ. With each new friendship and acquaintance which Forbes made—and this is especially true of young men—he saw deeper into the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ. This was the secret of his extraordinary interest and amazing belief in nearly every one of us. He saw in us all, however ordinary, however commonplace—yes, however unlovely were our lives—something somewhere of Jesus Christ.

"Then some of us were privileged to discover that what he felt for us was something far deeper and holier than is expressed by the word 'interest'. It was love. In every fullest sense he understood the grand full meaning of the word. His love for his friends was something altogether larger and deeper and truer than is generally understood by the word. It was so holy a thing that it is hard to write of it. He knew, and the knowledge is perhaps rarer

than is supposed, what in all its fulness was the meaning of the love of one man for another. This is why he could enter into the spirit of Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' as almost no one else could. Tennyson's experience might have been so entirely his own. His love for his friends was indeed a wonderful, sacred thing, beautiful to see. With Henry Drummond he felt that it was better not to live than not to love. Love was to him a part of all his being; for in him dwelt 'the strong Son of God, Immortal Love,' compelling him to love his fellow men.

"It was to him a real grief that (as he often quite wrongly supposed) one or two of those, for whom he would quite willingly have cut off his right hand if in any way it could have advantaged them, cared not at all for him, nor ever understood how he cared for them. But he found relief from the strange unsatisfied longing, engendered in him by this belief, in intense continuous prayer for those whom he loved. He prayed, it is certain, as few men pray. Prayer was to him the very breath of life. And his prayers, like his life, must have been utterly selfless. Many do not understand the amount they owe to his prayers. Some of us may some day realise the magnitude of the debt; at present it is not seen. But he prayed with all the effort of his being for his friends: eagerly, passionately, unceasingly he prayed. 'Pray for him, believe in him; believe in him, pray for him,' he was never tired of saying to those who spoke to him of some disappointing friend. And his own life was a proof of the power which lay behind such prayer.

"To those reading this who did not know Forbes Robinson it may seem that a man of such intensity of feeling and holiness of life would be more likely to frighten away than to attract to close quarters the

'average undergraduate' (whose existence he denied). This most certainly was not the case. For, if there was in him something utterly divine, he was also human as ever man could be. He admired, like the veriest freshman, the physical strength and powers of the athlete. In his presence the man of bodily attainments and strength of limb experienced the strange sensation of being looked up to by one whom he knew to be utterly superior to him. But perhaps nearly all who knew him experienced this at one time or another; for he must have been one of the most humble men that have ever lived. His humility was almost a fault. It led him to depreciate himself so far. And yet how beautiful a thing it was! He did indeed count all men better than himself.

"He easily condoned offences which in some eyes, and especially the eyes of dons, loom as a general rule heinous and large. And the riotous undergraduate, who cuts chapels and lectures, found that a don—yes, and a junior dean—could be a friend of his.

"He possessed too a keen and real sense of humour. He could, and often did, laugh with all his heart. He chaffed continuously his large circle of undergraduate friends. When he was questioning a man in the lecture-room, you felt that all the time he was half-chaffing him. He addressed us all in lectures as 'Mr.,' in a half-serious, half-amused style. 'It is the only chance for some men to retain any self-respect—to address them as "Mr."'—he would say, after the discovery of some more than usual piece of ignorance in his class of 'special' men; 'for how can a man have any self-respect unless addressed as "Mr." who does not know which are the Pastoral Epistles, or who is the Bishop of Durham (then Bishop Westcott)?'

"He could not remember the name of his best friend on

occasions, and he would recount with real glee how he had been known successfully to introduce two men, not knowing the name of either. On one occasion it fell to him to introduce to each other a low-caste West African native and a particularly high-caste Brahmin rejoicing in a lofty sounding polysyllabic title: of course he transposed the names — with results, so he declared, almost fatal to himself.

"He would display with humorous pride to his athletic friends a photograph of himself coming in second in a toboggan handicap race at St. Moritz, which he always maintained he morally won. He was full of spontaneous humour. When he greeted you, when he looked at you, when he talked with you, it was always with a half-smile on his face. It was his sense of humour which procured him a quick entrance into many a man's life and heart. It was his sense of humour which made the hostile undergraduate, hauled for cutting lectures or chapels, forget his hostility and the presence of the don; though at the end of the interview he, probably for the first time, began to think whether chapel-going had any meaning, whether a lecture, if listened to, might conceivably profit the listener. It was his sense of humour which made all feel at home with him, which at the first attracted the most unlikely men, which inspired with confidence the shyest, and made the most frivolous and thoughtless not afraid of him. Yet while he would laugh and make us laugh, for as long as ever any one wished, through all his unaffected merriment he made men feel the strange earnestness of his life. And all knew that, while he never obtruded on us religious or even serious matters, he was ready at a moment's notice to speak with us of spiritual things. And most men felt something of what a friend of his wrote of him after his

death: 'He understood of "the things that matter" more than any man that I shall ever meet'. And many men who owe to Forbes Robinson their first serious thoughts of and their first insight into 'the things that matter' must feel the same. It is this fact that makes it impossible to measure the far-reaching deep influence of his life. For the greatness of that life lay not in any large influence on any large body of undergraduates, though the undergraduate life of Christ's College must, as a whole, have felt his real influence; nor was his life great simply because he was a scholar and a thinker. But his life was great, and will for all time remain great, because it was an inspiration—there is no other word: it was, and is, a lasting, vivid, real inspiration to a few. What Bishop Westcott did on a large scale, Forbes Robinson did on a small. He inspired men —inspired them to search for and hold to the realities of life.

"To sum up: a man admitted into the inner chamber of his life learnt there something of these three things: (*a*) The value of his own personality, (*b*) the meaning of love, (*c*) the power of prayer.

"(*a*) *The value of his own personality.*—A man, as he talked with Forbes, was taught with increasing clearness the amazing possibilities of life for any one who has tried to think what it means to say 'this is I'. Many of us, conscious in ourselves only of very ordinary attainments, of no very high ideals, of weaknesses of character, learnt from our friend that in spite of all this, our own personality was God's greatest gift to us. We learnt from him that our own particular commonplace life was, with all its failures and inconsistencies, a tremendous enterprise, big with opportunities. He taught us this by his belief in us. He held (again like Bishop Westcott) through everything

to the faith of 'man naturally Christian'. By his belief in a man he forced him at last to believe in himself. For he taught us that we were, each one, two men—the real 'Ego' and the false—and that the real self must in the end have the mastery over the false, because that real self was the Christ.

"(*b*) *The meaning of love.*—It is impossible for lesser natures to enter into all that the word love meant to Forbes. His love for his friends was 'wonderful, passing the love of women'. He loved some men with an intensity of feeling impossible to describe. It was almost pain to him. If he loved a man he loved him with a passionate love (no weaker expression will do). We undergraduates found our natures too small to understand it. Yet, as we learnt to know him more and more, we began too to learn a little of what real love is—we began to learn what can be the meaning and the wonder and the power and the depth of the love of man for man. And we understood in time that his love for us and his belief in us sprang from the same high source—from the Christ in him, in us.

"(*c*) *The power of prayer.*—This last lesson explained the other two. Perhaps only a few of those who knew Forbes as undergraduates learnt it. Yet an intimate knowledge of him must have forced almost any man to the belief that 'more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of'. He prayed for those he loved, it is certain, for hours at a time. All his thoughts about some men gradually became prayers. He could not teach us everything that prayer meant to him; he could not teach us to pray as he prayed. Yet through him one or two at least of his undergraduate friends saw a little further into the eternal mystery of prayer. And men must sometimes—

with all reverence be it said—have experienced in his presence the same kind of a feeling of some great unseen influence at work as that which the disciples must have experienced in the presence of Christ after He, apart and alone, had watched through the night with God in prayer. For many an hour of his life did Forbes spend like that, striving with God for those he loved. He believed—he knew (this was his own testimony)—that he could in this way bring to bear upon a man's life more real effective influence than by any word of direct personal teaching or advice. So did he prove once more that the man of power in the spiritual world is the man of prayer.

"These are the great lessons of Forbes Robinson's life—lessons which many a careless undergraduate learnt in a greater or less degree, and, learning, caught from the teacher something of his passion for life and love and prayer, for service of God and man.

"There must be many who will not soon forget the lessons; there must be many in whose lives the influence and inspiration of that saintly life will be for ever a power making for holiness and high ideals of living; there are, it is certain, very many who will thank God continually that they were, in their undergraduate days, allowed to call Forbes Robinson friend.

"How many of us, when we heard with a shock of almost horror that he had passed from us, conjured up before us the picture we shall never see again—the picture of our friend sitting any evening at his table in Darwin's historic rooms at Christ's, dimly lighted with candles. We shall remember long the quick look up at our entrance, the half-smile on his face, the welcome of a man's love in his eyes, however busy and tired he might be. Then, though it cost him later hours out of bed, the invitation to

sit down, followed quickly by an indignant remonstrance as we ousted his cat from the best arm-chair. And then the talk that followed: sometimes almost trivial; sometimes (but only if we wished it) deeply serious; sometimes —and these occasions were precious—a kind of soliloquy on his part, as he spoke of God, of the realities of life, of love, of prayer. Then, with still the same half-smile, he would bid us 'Good-night,' and watch us out of the room with the same look of love in his eyes with which he welcomed us, as he turned back to his table to work and think and pray far into the night.

"So many a one of us has left him again and again, to return to the merry, careless, selfish undergraduate world a nobler, better man. And now he has passed from us—'dead ere his prime' we should say, did we not understand that somewhere the faithful, hopeful, loving soul has better work to do. He is, as he ever was, 'in Christ'. He lives. His life remains here and beyond. His faith in God, in prayer; his hope for every man; his utterly wonderful, amazing love,—they still remain. For *νυνί μένει* (nothing can rob us of the word) *πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη, τὰ τρία ταῦτα· μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.*"

Five of the addresses contained in this volume (i. to iv. and xxiv.) deal with the subject of prayer and with difficulties suggested by various aspects of the subject. These difficulties were in all cases those which he had himself experienced. If his study of moral science had enabled him to appreciate them more keenly than others, his personal experience had imparted to him the assurance which he sought to communicate to those to whom he spoke, that the difficulties, however great or insoluble they might be, were not such as to justify any one in ceasing to maintain the practice of prayer, a practice which, in his

own case, might fitly be described as "the practice of the presence of God".

The address on "Human Free-Will in Relation to Prayer" contains a reference to the apparent contradiction involved in the coexistence of eternal predestination and human free-will, and the difficulty which this contradiction suggests in view of the practice of prayer. The direction in which the explanation of this contradiction should be sought was on one occasion suggested by him in an address to undergraduates given in his own rooms. The following are a few extracts from this address:—

"It is as inconceivable that the course of nature can be changed by your request to a human being, as that it should be changed by your prayer to a higher Being. In practical life we ignore the difficulty. I know by experience that if I ask you to pass that match, you will. If I don't, you won't. 'How you can do so, I have no idea.' The fatalist who sits in his chair, and says: 'If it is determined that you should pass the match, you will: if not, you won't. I need therefore do nothing'; has logic on his side, but he won't get the match. . . . But, it will be objected, the analogy does not hold good. When you ask me to pass a match, I don't know beforehand what I am going to do. God, on the contrary, is omniscient, and knows what He is going to do. I answer, Are you sure that He does know beforehand what He is going to do? Jesus Christ said: 'Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him'. He never said: 'Your Father knows what He will do before you ask Him'. If men are really free agents, can omniscience itself tell beforehand what they will do at any given moment? I doubt it. It seems to me that it is possible to regard God as foreseeing indeed the final goal of this world's develop-

ment together with the entire series of the essentially necessary stages in that development, and yet as having left much that is undecided in order that it may be decided by time."

He then quoted from Dr. James' *The Will to Believe* (pp. 181 *et seq.*), the following illustration which was one that had specially appealed to himself:—

"Suppose two men before a chessboard, the one a novice, the other an expert player of the game. The expert intends to beat. But he cannot foresee exactly what any one actual move of his adversary may be. He knows, however, all the *possible* moves of the latter; and he knows in advance how to meet each of them by a move of his own which leads in the direction of victory. And the victory infallibly arrives, after no matter how devious a course, in the one predestined form of checkmate to the novice's king. Let now the novice stand for us finite free agents, and the expert for the infinite mind in which the universe lies. Suppose the latter to be thinking out his universe before he actually creates it. Suppose him to say, I will lead things to a certain end, but I will not *now* decide on all the steps thereto. At various points, ambiguous possibilities shall be left open *either* of which, at a given instant, may become actual. But whichever branch of these bifurcations becomes real, I know what I shall do at the *next* bifurcation to keep things from drifting away from the final result I intend."

Later on in the course of the same address, speaking of his own experience he said: "There are thousands of men now living who are firmly persuaded that they have themselves received answers to prayer, and they would smile at you if you said that you doubted the fact. They would simply reply: 'But I know that it is true from personal

experience'. This is the attitude which I am myself compelled to take up. I do not profess to look upon the matter from an unbiassed standpoint. I feel more strongly upon the subject of the reality of prayer than upon any other subject in the world."

The addresses in this volume are printed almost exactly as they were delivered. Several statements in reference to prayer which occur in the first four addresses, occur again in the ordination addresses at the end of the book: but I have thought it better to admit the repetition rather than destroy the unity of these last addresses. They are to a greater degree than any of the others a transcript from his own experience.

C. H. R.

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WHY SHOULD WE PRAY.

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I FIND a difficulty in handling the subject of my text. I am sure that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," and that the man of prayer is the man of power. I feel that any one who prays is safe,

> For Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees.

But subjects on which a man feels deeply are not those about which he can express himself readily. And—do what I will—I am painfully conscious how hard it is to impart to any one else the certainty of my own belief. Forgive me, then, if my words fail to carry conviction. I do but speak, because I must—because I greatly believe in prayer. I shall not now discuss the grave objections which have been urged against the possibility of prayer. I shall assume that prayer is possible. I will first deal with one simple question which must often have suggested itself to you, Does it make any practical difference whether I pray or not? If—you say—I could be certain that it did, I would at all costs find time for prayer. But until I am convinced of its usefulness, I am slow to make the effort. Why should I pray?

The argument which appeals to me most is this—*Jesus Christ prayed.* Think what that means. The best man

that ever lived felt the need of prayer. Most of us have met good people who insisted upon the value of prayer, but some of them were unpractical or fanatical, and we distrusted their judgment. Now no fair-minded man can accuse Jesus Christ of fanaticism. On the contrary, He was singularly calm and self-possessed. "Does the Lord's Prayer breathe a feverish enthusiasm?" "The habitual style of Jesus," it has well been said, "on the subject of religion, if introduced into many churches of His followers to-day, would be charged with coldness." "He never uses any ecstatic language." Unlike a fanatic He is "open to every impression of the life around Him. His eye rests kindly on the flowers and the children, on the lily of the field, on the birds in the air and the sparrows on the housetop." His outlook upon the world is wide, healthy, natural, sane. Yet He could not live without prayer. It was more to Him than food or sleep. At the end of a busy day, He leaves His room while it is yet dark to find a lonely spot, and "there He was praying". When He has a difficult decision to make in the morning, we are told that "He spent all night in prayer to God". A few hours before His death, we see Him in the garden under the olives, bowed down to the earth, wrestling in prayer. As He "prayed" and "prayed again more earnestly," so deep was His anguish, that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground". When I doubt the use of prayer, the thought comes to my mind, "Jesus Christ prayed. If He needed prayer, you need it at least as much as He."

Another reason which weighs with me is this: Jesus Christ not only prayed Himself, but *He told others to pray.* He understood human nature. He could read character.

"He knew," said a close observer of His movements, "all men, and had no need that any one should give him information about man; for He Himself knew what was in man". He knew what was in the saint, the hypocrite, the criminal, the average man. He never treated two men alike, because He knew that God never made two men alike. He saw the infinite variety of human needs. Yet there was one need which He felt was common to the race, was in man because he was man, the need of prayer. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint"—to pray when they are past feeling—to pray when God never says a word and gives no hint of His existence. If heaven is hard and cold, then is the time to pray again more earnestly. You remember that illustration which only Jesus would have dared to use. A woman contrives to make an unscrupulous judge, destitute of religion and humanity, take up her case; because she gives him no peace until he does. "Though I fear not God nor man, yet because this widow worries me, I will do her justice, lest she wear me out by her perpetual coming." If, argues Christ, a woman prays to a cynical magistrate, will you pray less, because you have a God to pray to? If ceaseless begging moves a man of the world, will it have no effect upon a Father in heaven? Do you want anything from God? Then you must ask. "Ask and it shall be given you . . . every one that asketh receiveth." Take that woman as a model. Be as insistent as she was, and you will have your reward.

"If you want, you must ask." This teaching of Christ suggests a difficulty to the modern mind. We understand why a friendless woman adopted such tactics in dealing with a brutal judge, but it is not easy to see why we should have to treat God in a similar way. Is it not an

arbitrary law to enact—if you want, you must ask? Surely if God loves us, He will give without our asking. Why does He not do so? I believe the reason to be simply this: He would if He could; but sometimes He cannot.

He would if He could. I am sure that there is no unwillingness on God's part. He longs to give us of His best. There is no sacrifice that He has not made, that He would not make again on our behalf, for the simple reason that He loves us.

But sometimes He cannot. I hardly dare utter the words. Yet I feel that they are true. The very prayer which Christ taught us, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," implies that although God's will is done elsewhere, it is not always done here—and the reason must be that there are wills on earth which act in opposition to His. They can do so, because they are free. In giving us freedom, God of His own good pleasure seems to have limited His power. Omnipotence itself cannot force a man to be good. It can punish him, it can kill him; but, as long as the man has a will of his own, whether in this or in any other world, he can defy God. The ultimate appeal to such a man is not force, but affection. And God depends upon this magnetic power to draw all men to Himself. He loves men, and He knows that there is no limit to the power of love. His love makes Him respect their freedom. He will not force Himself upon them. He will not come unless He is asked. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him and he with Me." He knocks. He will not—He cannot—enter unless we deliberately ask Him. Prayer is opening the door. Prayer

is inviting God to stay no longer outside, but to make His home within. It is undoing the barrier which separates our puny life from the great life which is working around us. It is a confession that we can no longer exist without larger sympathy and help—an admission that we must share our thoughts and aims with another, and be guided by a higher wisdom than our own. The moment the man opens the door, great results can be achieved. Admit God, and omnipotence is on your side. Refuse Him admission, and you are left to starve on your own resources. You live alone, out of touch with all that is best in the universe. Meanwhile God respects your freedom, and stays without—knocking and asking to come in.

I do not mean to imply that God can give us nothing unless we open the door. He gives us much without any effort on our part. Why, you and I are pensioners on His bounty, and the world in which we live is His almshouse. We owe all we have and are to Him. All sorts and conditions of men receive His gifts. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." But what I mean is that He does not will to be merely a benevolent philanthropist, dispensing His boons with indiscriminate charity. There comes a time in life when He is not content to treat us as pensioners, when He asks us to share His thoughts and purposes, when He who inhabiteth Eternity craves our help—our sympathy—our friendship. Do you ask the reason of the love that will not let us go, of the humility—the persistence—the self-restraint which keeps Him knocking at the entrance of our worthless, ungrateful lives? The only reason that I know is that which Jesus Christ gave. It is because He is a Father.

An earthly parent does not think of his child as a pensioner. At first, no doubt everything is done for the infant. Food, shelter, life itself are the parent's gifts. There is no response on the part of the child. But as it grows, the father's instinct makes him yearn for the boy's society, makes him happy when the lad confides in him his little schemes and needs, and treats him not as a benefactor, but as an intimate friend. If the boy suspects and avoids his father, if he shuts the door of his life against him and treats him as an enemy, if he persists in taking gifts without thinking of the giver; then the boy is the loser. He has isolated himself from his father's life, and made an almshouse of his home. The father can do little for him. He can dole out material comforts, but even these must be given with a sparing hand. For such gifts lose their value, until the child feels from whom they come. Nay, they must sometimes be withheld, that the lad may learn to come and ask, and trust his father.

> What if earth be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
> Each to the other like, more than on earth is deemed?

It must be so. Our highest conception of God is derived from the study, not of philosophy, but of an English home.

> All fathers learn their craft from Thee;
> All loves are shadows cast
> By the beautiful, eternal hills
> Of Thine unbeginning past.

"My Son," says the unseen Father, "give Me thine heart. Open the door and let Me in, and I will give you more than you ask. Without Me you can do nothing: with Me you can do anything. If you persist in refusing Me admittance, I cannot give you what I would.

My gifts would do you harm. They would make you stay upon yourself. If you had all without asking, you would not need Me. You would not hear Me knocking. Therefore you shall not have, until you pray. You shall fail again and again. It may be that you will appeal to Me in despair."

If you want, you must ask. God requires your prayers. The effort which is involved in putting your thought into words implies trust on your part. The more effort you make, the more you persist in praying when there is no response—the greater is your trust, and the more He can do for you. If He does not give until you ask more than once, until—it may be—you struggle day after day to gain your request—God's silence is due, believe me, not to His indifference, but to His self-restraint.

II.

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY.

"And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray."—St. Luke xi. 1.

In my last sermon I tried to answer the question, Why should we pray? This morning may I call your attention to another question, How should we pray?

We are met by a preliminary difficulty. Can we pray for anything and everything? Have we a right to ask for success in ordinary occupations, in a game, a race, an examination? Or are these private concerns of ours unworthy of the notice of an Absolute Being? Is it not a higher conception of prayer, to ask only for spiritual blessings? Now I shall not answer such questions in my own words. I fall back upon the teaching of One Who knew better than we do what prayer meant. I take the words of Jesus Christ; and no one will accuse Him of unworthy conceptions of the eternal world: "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and they shall be yours." All things whatsoever—this means you may pray for anything and everything. Note that word, "whatsoever". The *what* is promised, not the *when* or the *where* or the *how*. You are not told the time, the place, the manner in which your request shall be granted—only the fact that what you ask

for shall be yours. It has recently been asserted by a popular writer that all sensible men will soon see the absurdity "of airing their egotisms in God's presence through prayer, or of any such quiet personal intimacy". Jesus Christ, on the contrary, asserts that Providence is concerned with the welfare even of the lower creation: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? But not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father." Much more is it concerned with the details of human life: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered". If that be so, the "trivial round" of our life is not trivial in the eyes of God, Who—albeit He "inhabiteth Eternity"—"yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth". It seems to me that the natural and reverent way of approaching God is not to settle beforehand the limit of His power, not to conclude that He can only grant this or that request, but to take Christ at His word, to tell God everything, to come as a little child to a Father. He sees further than we do; and if in our blindness we ask for that which will do more harm than good, the Father will give not what we think we want, but what we really want—give what we should have asked for, could we have seen as far as He does.

> God nothing does, or suffers to be done
> But thou would'st do thyself, could'st thou but see
> The end of all events as well as He.

The answer may be delayed, it may come in an unexpected form. But no prayer is in vain. It has had an effect; and things are not the same as they would have been if we had not prayed. If God does not seem to give us what we ask, it is because He is giving "more exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think".

If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word,
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the brightness of the Lord.

I shall then take it for granted that we may ask for anything and everything. The question remains: What kind of prayer is most acceptable to God? To a Christian there can be but one answer. Christian prayer is modelled on the Lord's Prayer. "After this manner pray ye." Any other manner must be a wrong manner. We can use what words we please, but unless we have the manner, the method, the spirit of this prayer, we fail to pray aright; and our requests cannot be granted in the form in which we make them.

Throughout His teaching Christ is "as the greatest only are, in His simplicity sublime". But the simplicity conceals a depth of mental insight, which escapes the vulgar notice. Few men realise the intellectual strength which underlies Christ's utterances. His language is so easy to follow, that they overlook the originality of His thought. Because this prayer is

The simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;

because we are familiar with every word that it contains, we assume that we know what it means, and that our own prayers do not differ from it in any essential respect. I believe that we are wrong. I believe that the Lord's Prayer is as far removed in temper and feeling from many of our prayers as "the heaven is higher than the earth, and God's thoughts higher than our thoughts". Nay, some of our prayers are almost a caricature of the model upon which they profess to be based. Let me explain what I mean.

Many men (and I confess that I have sometimes been among the number), before they attempt to use the Lord's Prayer cut it—as it were—in half; and deliberately place the second half first. Do you say, I have never done such a blasphemous thing in my life? I answer: How often in your private prayer—which as a Christian you profess to model on the Lord's Prayer—have you begged for material aid, for pardon, for help in the struggle with evil; before you have thought of asking that God might be honoured, His kingdom come, His will be done? The Lord spoke of *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom, *Thy* will; before He mentioned the words—Give, Forgive, Help. Honestly, I do not think you can claim to have an intelligent grasp of the Lord's Prayer, if the moment you begin to pray on your own account, you reject the model which is given you. It is childish to say, Lord teach us to pray; and then to repeat the prayer He gives us backwards. The Lord would have placed the last half first, had He wished us to use it first. It would be more respectful for those who profess and call themselves Christians not to think themselves wiser than the Master.

There are times indeed when in hours of intolerable anguish we can think of nothing but self, when in the depth of despair we roll our burden upon the Lord. But these are exceptional occasions. In our ordinary prayers we should endeavour to enter into the life and thought and counsel of God, to take them as our centre instead of self, not to mould His will, but to realise that "our wills are ours—to make them God's".

We do right to pray for anything and everything we need. But we do wrong to place our needs first. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said: It is

more blessed to give than to receive." Come then to God, not primarily to get, but to give; not to beg, but to thank; not to bring Him down to us, but to rise "on stepping-stones of our dead selves" to the fulness of His life. Place first things first. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all that you need shall be added unto you."

There is another way in which we mutilate the prayer. Not only do we cut it in half, and say the second part before the first; but when we have done this, we are not content until we have, as it were, gone through the prayer with a pen, and crossed out the word *us* and written in the word *me*. Do you doubt it? Think of your own prayers. Think how even in this building—which is a standing protest against individualism—your thoughts have centred on self—on private needs, personal edification, individual struggle with sin: how you have mentally substituted the word "me" where our book of Common Prayer has "us". Are you any less selfish in your private prayer? When, in obedience to Christ's command, you "enter into your closet and shut your door and pray to your Father which is in secret," have you used His words, "Give us our bread, Forgive us our sins, Deliver us from evil," or have you confined your interest to self, "Give me, Forgive me, Deliver me"? There is a popular but misleading phrase which asserts that a man's religion is a matter between himself and his God. Religion is this, but it is infinitely more. The Fatherhood of God involves the brotherhood of man; and he who attempts to isolate himself, even in thought, from the human family, will find by experience that *God has no private blessings to bestow*. Selfishness — favouritism: they are odious enough in common life: they are still more odious

when disguised in religious phraseology. The Eternal Father has no favourites. All He can do for the man who thinks first of self is to teach him not to do so—to train him to place self last. He would fain give us larger human sympathies, that we may feel the sorrows and imperfections of others as our own. The nearer to God, the nearer to man. He Who is nearest to God is the Elder Brother of the race—the Son of Man.

I do not mean to imply that there are not times when we are overwhelmed with the burden of individual failure, suffering, guilt. What I do mean is that we have no right to make these morbid experiences the law of our normal, healthy life. We should remember that we have other sins besides our own to confess, other needs besides our own to urge. We should not be content with saying, give, forgive, help *me;* but go on to pray for others, and—not least for those whom God has knit to us by ties of neighbourhood, kindred, friendship. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is more blessed to pray for others than for self. Blessed is the man who when hard pressed by the enemy, remembers the comrade by his side. He who when praying seeks to save his life shall lose it. But he who loses his life, who forgets to think of self because he is praying for another, shall find that in endeavouring to save a brother's soul he has saved his own soul also.

> He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

I have set before you a hard ideal. I have done so, because I have learned from my Master to have a profound belief in humanity. I know that there is in each of

you unlimited capacity for sacrifice. In my Master's name, I call upon you to develop that capacity—and most of all when you come to pray. Hard—of course it is hard Nothing that is worth doing is easy. Prayer which is worth the name involves struggle, sacrifice, conquest.

III.

HUMAN FREE-WILL IN RELATION TO PRAYER.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."—St. Matthew xvii. 20.

MANY attempts have been made to explain away the force of these words, to reconcile them with preconceived theories of life, to tone down their apparent harshness, and to interpret them as a beautiful Eastern metaphor—I believe that all such attempts are doomed to failure, that our Lord, when He uttered them, meant what He said, and intended to leave the impression upon our minds which such language must inevitably produce, that the greatest power in the world is faith.

We have reason to be thankful that our Lord used the actual phraseology which He did. For all of us are constantly tempted to think that the prayer of faith, if it has any power at all, has only power in what we term the sphere of religion, that it has no influence over the ordinary objects which we see around us. Our Lord distinctly rejects such a conception. He bids His disciples look at a mountain, perhaps the high mountain of Transfiguration, from which He had but lately descended, and then asserts the power of faith over that actual object which they saw before them: "If ye have faith . . . ye

shall say unto this mountain, Remove . . . and it shall remove".

And yet we cannot help feeling that the very object of which our Lord spoke is more than anything else in nature the symbol of permanence, the type of iron, unchangeable Law. The eternal hills, which existed long before we came into the world and will exist long after we have gone from it, seem to mock all the efforts of our faith by their absolute impassibility. How can our prayers influence them? They obey fixed laws, and will obey them whether we pray or not.

It is not enough to say in reply that behind these apparently unchanging mountains is a Being, Who has absolute power over them, a Person, in Whose hands are the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, a God Who is capable of hearing and answering prayers, and moulding the hills according to our requests.

To know that behind all the works of nature there exists an Almighty and everlasting Ruler, and that therefore there can be no such thing as chance is a revelation full of comfort, but one that does not entirely satisfy our difficulties. For surely if there be such a Being, He must long ago in His perfect power and wisdom have formed great purposes of love, which must be worked out independently of us. He must have fore-ordained everything that will happen: the minutest details must long ago have been planned by Him. How then is it possible for us to alter His plans in the least degree by any requests which we can make? The changes which the mountain will undergo must have been ordained long before we were born. How can prayers have any power, if everything has been eternally predestinated?

To this question there can probably never be any answer

which is entirely satisfactory from our human standpoint. For now we see through a glass darkly, as yet we know in part: the time has not come when we shall see face to face, and know even as also we have been known.

But if we cannot reconcile the two facts of eternal predestination and of the power of prayer, we must not for that reason overlook either. On the one hand we shall become heartless and hopeless unless we firmly believe that "through the ages one increasing purpose runs," a purpose which will work itself out independently of us, a purpose of Love which has in long ages past settled what shall take place, and to what it will lead. And on the other hand we shall become lifeless and formal atheists unless we allow that our prayers can and do have an effect in the world, that events are moulded according to our requests, that God does hear and answer the supplications of His people.

How the two sides of the question can be reconciled is like every other philosophical question an inexplicable problem. But is this all we can say? I think not. It is true that philosophers can never solve any of the deepest problems they propound—but they can do what—strange as may appear—is the next best thing. They can suggest fresh difficulties in what appeared plain before, and then they can group and compare the difficulties one with another. They can show how a problem which meets us in the higher facts of worship is exactly the same as that which exists in the commonest transactions of daily life. For the wisest men are those who are most convinced of the difficulties in everything, who never cease to wonder at the mystery which surrounds the meanest acts, in whom familiarity, instead of breeding contempt, inspires adoration.

Let us then inquire whether the mystery of prayer is peculiar to what men are accustomed to call religious life, or whether it is a mystery which meets us wherever we turn.

To my mind one of the strangest facts in life is the power which I undoubtedly possess of asking a friend to do what I wish, with the assurance that he in turn has the power of gratifying my request. I am free to make the request or not as I please. He is free to grant it or not as he pleases. This sense of freedom is genuine, because God Who cannot lie gave it to us. I also know that it makes all the difference to me whether I make my request or not. If I ask for what I want, I shall have it. If I do not, I shall not have it. And yet, on the other hand, I am perfectly certain that I live in a world in which every event has been eternally predestinated, in which "things are what they are, and things will be what they will be," whatever I say or think or do; in which, thank God, there is no single detail which has not been arranged by Him independently of me long before I was born.

Thus are we not led to the belief that requests directed to man are quite as mysterious as those addressed to God? Nay, are they not more mysterious? For at times we can dimly conceive how He Who made all things can give us what He will, how He who ordained laws can use them for His own ends. But it is far harder to perceive how man, who made nothing, can give away what does not belong to him, how he can use laws, of whose nature he knows but little, to gratify his own desires.

Yet, however hard it is to perceive the reason, we know that in actual life we can make a request, which will be granted. How we have the power to do so is inex-

plicable, and yet we have the power. And we do not as a rule refuse to exercise the power, because we cannot understand how we can be possessed of it. A man, who in daily life refused to ask for food when on the point of starvation, because it was everlastingly predestinated whether he should live or die, and no effort on his part could make any difference, would be called a fool.

In our relations to God have we ever been guilty of this line of argument? Have we ever said: "It is no use praying for this or for that, my prayers will make no difference. The disease will take its course in a sick man, whether I pray or not. The laws of disease are beyond my control. It is eternally predestinated whether the man live or die"?

And yet all that God asks of us is to be consistent. Let your life be of one piece. Do not conduct half of it on one principle and half on another. Do not in your dealings with your fellow men take for granted that—in spite of everything being predestinated—your requests are of some value, whilst in your dealings with God you deny that they can be. Be consistent. If in your relations to man, you act upon the principles: "Ask and it shall be given; Seek and ye shall find"; act upon the same principle in your relations to God—Be logical.

And when God bids us be consistent and logical in our dealings with Him, let us remember (what we are always forgetting) that to see a line of action to be logical is not a sufficient motive to make us adopt it, that to see another to be wretchedly contradictory and inconsistent is not a sufficient motive to make us shun it, that our contradictions and inconsistencies can never be removed by efforts of our own, but only by One higher than ourselves, by the Spirit of Truth; that the only "strength and protection" which

can "support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations" is the strength and protection of God Himself, and that the strength to be consistent is to be gained by—and I am using no metaphor, but what I know to be true—prayer and praise which shall never cease in the midst of our busiest occupations and most distracting engagements.

IV.

THE CLAIMS OF THE MATERIAL AND OF THE SPIRITUAL.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would."—Gal. v. 17.

ST. PAUL is here explaining a common fact of human experience. The fact is this, ye do not do the things that ye would.

I have no need to prove the truth of the words. We know that they are true. We know what it is to aim at something above and beyond us. We know what it is to fail. As a rule the common routine of life, the dead level of conventionality and respectability may seem to suffice us. But there are times when the most worldly of us have risen above ourselves, when we have viewed our life from a higher standpoint, when we have seen it for a moment as God sees it, seen it in its true proportion. And as we have looked down from above, we have been ashamed of ever having been satisfied with what now appears mean and grovelling: we have resolved that the future at any rate shall atone for the past. But when we have come down to our ordinary life on the plain, the vision of the mountain top has become dimmer and dimmer. We begin to suspect our higher ideals. We lower our standard to suit our surroundings. And the

result is that though we shall retain a vague longing for something quite different, yet as a matter of fact we do not do the things that we would.

And then we are discouraged and vexed. What use is there in struggling? Let others aim at impossible ideals. We for our part prefer to occupy ourselves with something more profitable. One fact is certain. We have a desire and a capacity for enjoyment. We will satisfy these. We will live for ourselves. If we can give pleasure or assistance to others, without inconveniencing ourselves, we will do so. But we will not burden our life with quixotic conceptions of duty. We will live a completely selfish life. But even as we have made the attempt, we have been bewildered by a strange discovery. It is this: we do not do the things that we would. We are not as selfish as we could wish. We have decided to be entirely and consistently self-seeking. As a matter of fact we are not, we cannot be. We did not do the things that we would.

For at the very moment that we have convinced ourselves that we will aim at our own greatest happiness, and that every one else is really doing the same, though they may disguise the fact from others and even from themselves; suddenly a call comes—a call which does not appeal to our desire for pleasure, but to our sense of honour and manhood—a call bidding us do the very thing we would least care to do, and promising us no reward at all: and we are astonished to find that our craving for happiness is as nothing compared with that call. And before we have reasoned the matter out, we are acting utterly inconsistently. We are doing the very thing we ridiculed. We are giving up all for the sake of what we held to be an intangible abstraction—for the sake of Duty.

And thus it is that whether we will to do good or whether we will to do evil, we do not in reality accomplish our purpose. We do not do the things that we would.

What explanation can be given of this vacillation and inconsistency? "Evidently"—and here I am using the words of one of our most thoughtful Cambridge theologians, whose exposition of the passage I have closely followed throughout—"Evidently" (such an explanation) "cannot be satisfactory if it only tells us why our honest intentions are feeble, and not why our bad intentions are also feeble." St. Paul's explanation takes both facts into account: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other".

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." The selfish, lower side of our nature is continually asserting itself. It craves for satisfaction. It urges us to forget others and to live for our own enjoyment. It is that which tells us that the battle is lost. It is that which keeps us from doing the good that we would. But side by side with this, says St. Paul, there is another and opposite Power at work. If the flesh is lusting against the Spirit, the Spirit also has cravings of His own. These cravings demand full and complete satisfaction just as truly as do the lusts of the flesh. They will be content with nothing less. And if the flesh is constantly hindering us from doing the good that we would, this Power is making it impossible for us to become what at times we fain would become—mere animals.

But St. Paul is not content with stating and accounting for the fundamental inconsistency of human life. He tells us of a remedy. And you will notice that his remedy is not the one which men most readily adopt. When men become aware of the battle which is being fought between the higher and lower natures within them, when they

grasp the importance of the issues at stake, their natural tendency is to devote all their energies to the task of subduing and mortifying the flesh. But the flesh, as they learn by bitter and humiliating experience, is not an easy enemy to starve out. Its cravings have a tendency to reassert themselves in another form, and to return with sevenfold power to take possession of the man who had mastered them. St. Paul in the verse immediately preceding my text, tells us of a better, a completer remedy: "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Walk by the Spirit. Do not spend your force in simply mortifying and subduing the lower part of your nature. But deliberately develop the higher. Allow it free play. Let it assert itself. It has keen desires and intense cravings of its own. Satisfy them. Then you will find that the more you would satisfy them, the stronger they become. You will be aware of a power which is changing your whole nature, of a power which is making itself felt with ever-increasing force, which is mastering you, domineering over you, rendering it more and more difficult for you to yield without an effort to the lust of the flesh. You will have subdued the lower by becoming the slave of the higher—a slave in that service which is perfect freedom.

The difficulty which many men feel in acting upon such advice is that they literally have not time to do as St. Paul suggests. It takes time, it takes a considerable amount of time, to learn to walk by the Spirit, to learn to know God. And many a man feels that he has not the time to spare. Take the case of one whose life is spent in Cambridge. Year after year, as his interest in the world increases, as his faculties grow stronger by use, as his affection for his College and University deepens, he

finds that the calls upon his time become ever more and more exacting. Business presses upon him; engagements multiply; numerous unimportant, trivial things must be done, and they all take time. When he has an hour to himself, he is so worn out and exhausted that he cannot turn at once away from the rush and excitement of life to the still, quiet atmosphere of the unseen world. It is not that he has no interest in religion. He has an interest. But there are only a certain number of things that a man can do—only certain sides of his nature that he can develop. The easiest side to leave undeveloped is the most important of all—the spiritual side. And so he leaves that to take care of itself; and it is a fact, though he refuses to face it, that with all his advance in other respects, his spiritual faculties are less clear now than they were long years ago.

This lack of time presents a very real difficulty. I do not desire to minimise it. I am sure that God in judging us will take it into account. He will not forget how we were placed, and how hard it was to find time to be alone with Him. But He will take another fact also into account. It is this. At the end of each term He gives us a period of rest. He gives us the time that we so much need. He gives us an opportunity which we can use, if we will, of drawing near to Him. We have now, what we may not have had in the term, time to be alone with God. We can come to Him, we can—and I do not think that I am overstating the fact—spend some hours in His presence. We can learn to know Him, not by hearsay, but as He really is. We can learn to walk by the Spirit. If we do not use this period of rest as an opportunity for spiritual growth and development, at any rate we cannot plead the excuse that we have had

no time. If we do make use of it, however imperfectly, we shall find that our spiritual life is becoming stronger and more active, that we are learning to know and love God better. We shall find that when the work of the term begins again, we shall naturally, spontaneously turn to God, we shall see Him in all things, we shall find Him as near in the noise and bustle of the world as in the quiet of our own chamber.

But no advance in the spiritual life can be made without a tremendous struggle. It is not easy to force ourselves to be alone with God. It is not easy to obey Him implicitly. Is there, you say, any guarantee that the attempt will not end in disastrous failure; that the lust of the flesh will not prove stronger than the cravings of the Spirit? Yes, there is. And it is simply this—the power which is within us, the spiritual power of which St. Paul speaks, is no mere human power—but a living, an actual Person. Each yearning that we have to live a truer, a fuller life is the yearning of a Divine Being within us; each craving for the knowledge of God is His own craving.

> And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won;
> And every thought of holiness
> Are His alone.

And because He is with us, we need not—we dare not—despair. He can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. When we ourselves are cold and hard and dead, He is living. He can breathe His own divine life into us. He can help us when we are powerless to help ourselves. "The Spirit," says St. Paul "helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered".

V.

SCENES FROM THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK.

"And he appointed twelve, whom also he called apostles, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth."—St. Mark iii. 14.

THE Gospel from which my text is taken has no special interest to ordinary readers of the Bible. It seems to many of them but a short and imperfect summary of events which are recorded at greater length and with more literary skill in the first and third Gospels. They do not see the need of four separate accounts of the life of Christ, especially as three of them cover much the same ground and describe a scene in almost identical language. The Gospel whose absence they would least regret would undoubtedly be the second—that which to-day bears the name of St. Mark. The opinion is natural, and —unless I am mistaken—was shared by Christian people in the earliest times. This particular Gospel was not a favourite in primitive days. Indeed the original copy was so carelessly preserved that the last page is wanting, and has perished—perhaps for ever. In the copies which are read in church a more or less appropriate conclusion has been added by an unknown writer; but in the more accurate Greek Testaments which have been placed in your seats in chapel you will find that the Gospel comes to an abrupt end. Unfortunately it breaks off at a point of deep human interest. After describing the burial of

Christ, we are told that the frightened disciples summoned up courage enough to come and visit their Master's grave. To their amazement they find the tomb empty, and a young man sitting beside it. He tells them that their Master is alive: "He is risen, He is not here". They are seized with fear at the announcement. "They said nothing to any one, for they were afraid to. . . ." These are the last words of our present Gospel. The final page is gone, and we can only conjecture what it contained. It is remarkable that this Gospel—at once so brief and so mutilated—should have survived at all to our own days.

But we have reason to be grateful that it has come down to us. For during the last few years the worth of the Gospel has at last been realised. Scholars, who are divided on other questions, are agreed upon this, that we have here a document of priceless value. They have awakened to the fact that this fragmentary and imperfect book is the earliest account of the life of Jesus of Nazareth which the world contains; that other accounts were written later, that two of them actually borrow from this or some similar record. They have found reason to believe that we have here—as the oldest tradition asserts—a narrative which is indeed written by Mark, but dictated by his master Peter.

St. Peter in dictating his recollections of the life of Christ, has dwelt throughout on the scenes in which he was personally interested. He speaks with the authority and accuracy of an eye-witness. He is silent concerning the childhood of Christ, because he only came to know Him when He was grown to manhood, and had entered on public life. But he draws a vivid portrait of the Master as he saw Him—when He stayed in his own humble home in the busy seaport by the lake of Galilee.

The portrait gains immeasurably in strength and simplicity when you study it as a living whole. You lose more than you know by concentrating your attention on isolated texts or detached incidents in the Gospel, and refusing to connect the events one with another. You would not treat any other book in a similar manner. In reading the biography of General Gordon, would you be content with studying his utterances and dwelling upon his works of charity and humanity, without tracing the progress of his life as a whole? Nay, in the case of an ordinary novel, would you not lose half the dramatic force of the work if you read a page here and there, and made no attempt to trace the development of the plot? I ask you to treat Christ's life with at least the same respect as you would pay to a modern biography or work of fiction. If you would see Jesus for yourself, as the Son of Man living, working, moving amongst men, study this—the simplest and earliest record of His life. And if at times the style is harsh and monotonous, the sentences abrupt and idioms strange, remember that it is the work of an uneducated fisherman, who wrote, not with a view to dramatic effect, but to tell in his own way the story of the life of One whom he loved with a passionate devotion.

The very roughness of the original Greek to me at least enhances its value. I feel that it is no laboured literary effort of a scholar, but a plain story told by an eye-witness, who put down each event, as far as he could remember, in the order in which it took place.

Let me briefly trace the course of the narrative in the first three chapters, and I think you will agree with me that there is a true development—a natural and inevitable sequence of events. When we open the book, we find

ourselves in the midst of Galilean fishermen and townsfolk. Their interest has suddenly been roused by a report that a prophet has appeared, like one of the prophets of old. They are proud of Him as a kinsman of their own, and quickly rally round Him, as He appeals to their patriotism, and tells them that the Kingdom of God is at hand. When rumours of His supernatural power begin to circulate, their enthusiasm knows no bounds. He appeals to the common people, and the common people respond to the appeal. Crowds follow Him whithersoever He goes. No one has a word of fault to find with Him. When the first chapter ends, He is the most popular teacher in Palestine.

Have you ever on a clear summer's day watched the coming of a thunderstorm? The air is sultry and unusually still. Then one or two ominous clouds gather: you hear a rumbling of thunder in the distance: a few drops fall heavily on the thirsty ground. Presently the heaven grows black with clouds and wind, and there is thunder and lightning and a great rain. In the second chapter of this Gospel you may watch a gathering storm. It is the dark storm of hatred and envy, which rises against the new Prophet. Slowly but surely it gains in strength, until it beats down on its victim's head with wild and ungovernable fury. It is the hatred and envy of rival teachers, who dread the influence of Christ and feel that they are losing their hold on the people. The storm was slow in rising. The first sign of its coming appeared when Christ was doing—as was His wont—a work of mercy. A young man sick of the palsy lay before Him. Ere ever He healed the poor body, He spoke peace to the soul: "Child, thy sins are forgiven". The words are a shock to His audience. No mortal ever

made such a stupendous claim. They listen in profound silence. It is the ominous stillness which precedes a storm. "There were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this fellow speak thus? He blasphemes." Read farther and you will see that their malice soon takes more definite shape. Christ has outraged their feelings again by taking a meal with social outcasts. This time the rival teachers are not content with reasoning in their hearts. They express their feelings in words. "And the scribes . . . said to His disciples, Why doth He eat with tax-gatherers and sinners?" The words, you note, are addressed not to the Master but to His disciples. Later in the chapter their courage has increased. They approach the Master Himself: "And they come and they say to Him, Why do Thy disciples not fast?" "And they said to Him, Why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful?" But even though they approach the Master, they have not dared to criticise His own conduct. They only ask Him to explain that of His disciples.

At the opening of the third chapter, the storm bursts in its full fury. They throw off all disguise. "They kept their eye on Him, to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath day, in order that they might accuse Him." He accepts the challenge and performs the cure. They can endure Him no longer. They go away, and plot with their political friends to murder Him. "And they went forth and took counsel with the Herodians against Him to put Him to death."

Now turn from the opponents of Christ to Christ Himself. We are accustomed to think of Christ as beginning His ministry by denouncing the hypocrisy of the religious teachers of His day. But if St. Peter's narrative is true, He

did no such thing. Each time I read the narrative, I am struck by the pains which He took to explain His conduct, and if possible to win His opponents to Himself. He carefully explains and justifies all His actions. He finds no fault with those who differ from Him. It was only when they refused all His apologies and explanations, and deliberately set a trap to murder Him, that He ceased to argue and conciliate, and was roused to wrath by the malignity of His opponents. Not until the opposition had reached its climax do we read those strange, terrible words: "He looked round upon them with anger".

If the narrative thus far has developed naturally, the sequel is equally true to life. He "withdrew," says the Gospel, from the danger which threatened Him in the town, and went to the lake. There it would be difficult to apprehend Him, especially as He had a little boat to attend Him when necessary. But the primary object of the boat was not to escape from the fury of His enemies, but from the enthusiasm of the mob. For whilst the hatred of the Pharisees became more intense, His popularity with the crowd increased. They came because of His miracles. "And Jesus withdrew to the sea, and . . . a great multitude, hearing all that He did, came unto Him."

There lives to-day a saintly man in an island near St. Petersburg, who probably has more power in prayer than any man now living. He has the reputation through vast districts in Russia of working miracles. The steamer on which he sailed from the Island of Cronstadt to St. Petersburg used to be crowded with people desiring to come near him; for power is believed to go forth from him. He has been forced to accept the offer of a little steamer

to wait upon him because of the crowd who thronged him. If even Father John has to flee from the crowd, do we wonder when we read these words concerning his Master: "And He spake to His disciples that a little boat should wait upon Him because of the crowd, lest they should throng Him"? The only time I have seen Father John, the poor people flocked round his carriage, so that he could not enter it, until he had touched them. He could only escape them by driving quickly away and going back to his boat. "He healed," says St. Peter, "many, so that they pressed upon Him, in order that as many as had scourges might touch Him."

It was at this crisis of our Lord's life that He carried out a notable purpose. The plots against Him would soon be successful. He had but a short time to live. The exact date when His opponents would take His life, even He Himself may not have known. The times and the seasons the Father had put in His own power. If then He was to secure permanence for the work which He had begun, He must delegate most of it to others. He could not rely on the fickle mob. He must select out of them a very small number upon whom He could depend. It is therefore at this juncture that we find Him definitely gathering round Him a group of men, and separating them from the crowd. "He appointed twelve, whom also He called Missionaries." We are more familiar with the translation "Apostles". But we do well to remember that the word Missionary and the word Apostle have the same signification, that the first is Latin and the second is Greek. Each means "a man sent forth". The twelve were given this name because He intended to send them as His missionaries. But it would be worse than useless to send them out at once. They must first

be trained. His method of training is suggestive. He imposes no doctrines upon them. He does not even tell them Who He is. He simply lets them be with Him—be with Him all day long—be with Him when He was the centre of an admiring crowd who hung upon His words—be with Him in the evening when He was worn out and too tired even to speak—be with Him when He was asleep in the boat. He wished them to find out for themselves what manner of man He was. He would have them scrutinise His public and most private actions. He knew that if they were with Him, their ideals would be raised, their characters changed, their lives transformed. "He appointed Twelve, whom also He called missionaries, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them on a mission." His method was justified. The unique greatness of Jesus Christ is shown in His power to transform rough Galilean workmen into the finest missionaries that the world has ever seen. When He had gone away His bitterest opponents marvelled at the change which had come over these unlearned and ignorant men, "and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus".

Here we will pause in our study of the life of Christ. I have endeavoured to show you that there is a vital connection between each event in that life, if you read it in the order in which it occurred. The steady growth of opposition culminates in a murderous plot, and the Master—uncertain when He Himself may be called away—chooses others to continue the work which He has begun.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." The principle upon which He worked when living in Galilee is the principle upon which He is still working.

As in the days of His flesh, so now, He is dependent upon others to continue the work which He has begun. He cannot do it all Himself. If His work is ever to be finished in the world, He needs human beings to assist Him—to be His delegates, His missionaries. He appeals to us with infinite pathos to come and help Him in a work which He cannot do alone. Think of the humility of God, in stooping to ask mortal men to be co-partners—workers together with Him! Yet that is the purpose for which you were sent into the world—to become workers together with God. If you despise your birthright, and fail to do that for which you have been brought into existence, God will raise up simpler, better men to do it in your stead—and you yourself—good were it for you, if you had never been born.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." He never makes impossible demands. However feeble and sinful you may be, He will transform your life and use you in His service. As long ago He trained weak and sinful men, so now He will train and educate you. His method of training is the same. "He appointed Twelve that they might be with Him." He has appointed you also that you may be with Him. God grant that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus.

First seek thy Saviour out, and dwell
Beneath the shadow of His roof,
Till thou hast scanned His features well
And know Him for the Christ by proof.

Then potent with the spell of Heaven,
Go and thine erring brother gain,
Entice him home to be forgiven,
Till he, too, see the Saviour plain.

No fading frail memorial give
To soothe his soul when thou art gone,
But wreaths of hope for aye to live,
And thoughts of good together done.

That so, before the judgment seat,
Though changed and glorified each face
Not unremembered ye may meet,
For endless ages to embrace.

VI.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

"He taught them many things in parables."—St. Mark iv. 2.

I PROPOSE this morning to continue our study of the portrait of Christ as drawn in outline by the rough hand of an uneducated Galilean fisherman. You will remember that we chose this particular portrait, not on account of its artistic merits, but because it was the earliest and simplest likeness of that unique Figure in human history—Jesus of Nazareth.

We traced the story to the point at which He had come into deadly opposition with the clergy and religious teachers. His life had been threatened, and He had withdrawn for safety and retirement from the town to the Lake of Galilee. He knew that His time was short, and that He would soon fall a victim to His enemies' designs. He chose, therefore, without delay twelve men to be His successors, to carry on the work which He had Himself begun. When He had trained them, His enemies might do their worst.

He began at once to educate them. He could not, even if He would, have them for any length of time entirely to Himself. The crowd is anxious to hear what He has to say. The Twelve, therefore, form but a small fraction of a very great multitude which gathers by the

shore of the lake. The Teacher sits in a boat on the blue sparkling waters. Whilst the sun shines down with tropical heat, there is a welcome breeze on the lake itself. "And there is gathered unto Him a very great multitude, so that He entered into a boat and sat in the sea; and all the multitude were by the sea on the land".

He adopted a method of instruction which He had never employed before. "He taught them many things in parables," that is to say, He told them simple tales of every-day life. He began by describing a farmer's experiences, whilst sowing his wheat. "And He said to them . . . Listen! Behold a sower went forth to sow." Although a man has no intention of wasting his grain, as a matter of fact some is always wasted. This farmer, in sowing too close to the border, missed his aim. "And it came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the side of the road." The seed never found its way into the field, but lay on the path, until "the birds came and ate it up". Not much would be wasted thus. Most of the seed would fall inside the field. But the field—as often in the north of Palestine—was itself deceptive. In places it was only thinly coated with soil. The hard rock was below. Accordingly some lighted "on a rocky part, where it had not much earth". The thin layer of soil was warmed by the stone beneath, and the seed grew quickly—as though forced in a hot-house. "And immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth." But it could not endure the blazing Eastern sun, "it was scorched, and because it had no root, it was dried up". His third experience is more successful. The seed again falls inside the field, and this time the soil is deep. But unfortunately the ground has not been sufficiently cleared. Thistles have been allowed to remain. The seed grows; but the

tender, delicate grain cannot develop amongst the coarser thistles; and—although it does not actually die—it fails in its object. "It brought forth no fruit." The rest of the seed is successful. It falls inside the field, where the earth is deep and the ground is clear. The rich soil near the lake more than rewards the farmer for his pains, and a single seed multiplies itself thirty, sixty and even a hundred times. "It brought forth thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold."

Three times therefore the farmer fails, and the causes of his failure are obvious. At first the seed did not get in, and therefore never had a chance. Then it got in, but could not get down, and therefore only grew for a time. Then it got in and down, but could not get room; and therefore, although it grew, it was not able to develop. "It brought forth no fruit." In the first case it failed to find entrance, in the second depth, in the third space. But when all three conditions are fulfilled, the farmer's efforts are crowned with success.

Such was the first story of common life, which the Master told. Not a single person present had any idea what it meant. Some had heard the Rabbis use simple illustrations, but the Rabbis always explained their meaning. This new Rabbi gave no explanation, but immediately went on to tell another story, and yet another. Why did He do so? Read the next verse, and you will see. "When He was alone, those who were about Him together with the Twelve asked Him of the parables." The effect of this new method of teaching was to sort His hearers. And no doubt this was the reason why the Master now began to employ it. His life had been threatened: He had but a short time left on earth. He must know of a certainty those upon whom He could

depend. The little group which stayed behind were in earnest. They wanted to pierce below the surface of things. They formed, as it were, an inner circle. They and they only could be entrusted with the Master's secrets. "To you hath been given the secret of the kingdom of God." Most of that dense crowd had gone away satisfied with the husk of the story. "Well," they would say to themselves, "that is a very true description of a farmer's troubles. What with bad luck and bad ground and bad seasons he has much to contend against. His life is not to be envied." It never struck them for a moment that there might be a deep meaning underlying the homely tale. The illustration had been given them in order to arouse their curiosity. But their curiosity had not been aroused. It was intended to make them think. But they deliberately refused to do so. They threw away an opportunity, and in doing so brought judgment upon themselves. The highest teaching never leaves a man as it found him. The man is either the better or the worse. No teacher with any insight can shut his eyes to this appalling fact—the twofold effect of every word that He utters. Least of all could the supreme Teacher. When He told those simple tales, He told them with His eyes open. He knew that at the end of the day, there would be an inner and an outer circle. If the first were better, the second must be worse. The one would be in possession of a new secret: the other would be further than ever from the kingdom of God. "To you hath been given the secret . . . but to those outside all things are done by a series of illustrations, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, that they may not turn and be forgiven."

I ask you this morning to join that inner circle, and listen to the Master's own interpretation. Do you ask, He says, who the farmer is? It is you yourself. And the seed? It is the word which you speak. "The sower soweth the word." You will find the same obstacles to contend with in addressing men, as the farmer has in sowing his field. Sometimes you will miss your aim altogether. Either you will treat the man in the wrong way, and fail to get down below the surface of his life. Or it may be that the fault will lie in the man himself. He is superficial and unwilling to let the message have an entrance. Whatever be the cause, whether it be your want of tact or the hardness of the man's nature, the message will never get in; and the natural result will follow. The enemy of all good will make the man forget even the very sound of the word he has heard. "Straightway cometh Satan and snatcheth away the word which has been sown in them." Again you will find another man who is not so much superficial as shallow. He will be delighted with your new ideas. He will seize upon them with avidity. He will make startling progress in a short time. And when you are flattering yourself that you have secured a promising convert, your hopes will be rudely shattered. The man's enthusiasm is real, but shallow. He has not counted the cost. The seed, as the farmer would say, has got in, but not got down. There is no depth. Such men "when they hear the word, immediately with joy receive it, and have no root in themselves, but last for a time. Then when trouble or persecution cometh because of the Word, immediately they take offence." In other cases you will find that your message gets in and gets down. But there is no room for it. The ground is pre-occupied. The man has already so many interests, that he really has no

space for a new one. There are already too many seeds growing in the same place, and your message will be crowded out. The ground requires thinning out: all the seeds cannot grow together. What is the result? There is a struggle for life. But in that struggle the new delicate growth of the spiritual life will be like the farmer's tender grain trying to force its way up amidst the rough, coarse thistles. The weaker will last for a time, but in the end it will have no room to live, "and there are others who are sown among thistles. These are they that hear the word, and the worries of life and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, and," although it does not actually die, "it becometh unfruitful". But in spite of failures there will be some who will reward you for your pains. You will meet with men who all their lives have been waiting for the message that you bring. Your word will get in and down, and find room. The growth will not be the same in every case. There may be some hardness, some rockiness, some thorns still left. But even the least productive—"the thirty-fold"—are mercifully counted as amongst the good. "And these are they who are sown on good ground, who hear the word and receive it and bear fruit thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold."

A feeling of melancholy comes over us when we hear the interpretation of the story. It is true, we say to ourselves, that the sower was successful in the end, but he failed three times when he succeeded once. Is this the proportion of failure to success? How can a man work with any heart, if three-fourths of his efforts are thrown away? We are not the first to be discouraged by the parable. "What becomes of this seed?" said a great popular preacher sixteen centuries ago. "Three parts," he

answers, "are lost, and the one is saved . . . they that are lost are more than they that receive the word."

But, I submit to you, is this a fair inference from the parable? Look at it again, and bear in mind that it is a picture drawn from life, and that it gives the experience not of an exceptional but of a typical sower. Now have you ever known a farmer lose three-fourths of his grain in trying to sow his field? If so, then, I admit, the parable spells despair. But if not, it is bright with hope. Most of your work will not be in vain. They that are lost are "less, not more," than they that receive the word.

But there is a further and surer ground of hope in the closing words of the story. When a farmer sows his land and loses some of the wheat, the seeds which are lost simply die or at any rate bear no fruit. The successful seeds, on the other hand, produce a number of others like themselves. Whilst then the failures come to a sudden and untimely end, the good go on increasing. Stress was laid by the Master upon this fact. "And other fell on good ground, and yielded fruit, coming up and increasing, and it brought forth thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold." It seems to me that He wished to point out the singular power which good has of reproducing itself. When in later days the disciples pondered over the parable, its closing words must have comforted them. "Even the least successful," they would say, "multiplied itself thirty times. Each of those thirty seeds, when sown again, will reproduce itself over and over again. If this be so, then there must be a strange vitality in the good. It must be an increasing power in the universe."

But how is the increase possible? How can the good develop so quickly? Can man hasten the process, or is it beyond his power to understand? Such questions

must have suggested themselves to thoughtful hearers. The Master read their thoughts, and answered them in advance. "Do you wonder," He seems to say, "at My last words? Is the development of good so miraculous? Think again of an ordinary farmer's experience, and you will see that this miracle is daily repeating itself in the world of nature. My kingdom—the kingdom of God—is as if a man 'casts seed in the ground, and he sleeps and wakes night and day, and the seed springs up and grows —how he knows not. The ground brings forth of itself, first a blade, then an ear, then the full corn in the ear. And when the fruit allows, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is ready'."

I remember my lecturer on philosophy once saying to his class: "People complain that the study of metaphysics never gets a man any further. Philosophers have spent centuries discussing the deepest problems of life, and they are no nearer a solution to-day than when they began. You must, however, bear in mind that there is one result which philosophy achieves. If it does not enable students to solve their difficulties; it does the next best thing; it shows them how to group them. They find that the difficulty which has been perplexing them is but part of a larger problem." Now what is true of philosophy is true of the parables in the Gospel. They solve no difficulties, they only group them. They show that the same problem which confronts a man in the spiritual world faces him at every turn, if he could only perceive it, in his ordinary life. We are so familiar with the fact that a seed put into the ground will develop by itself that we cease to be amazed at the miracle. We should only wonder if it did not occur, if—in the poet's words—there should be "spring no more, if nature's ancient power were

lost". But when the same process takes place in the moral sphere we are astonished. Few things impress us more than the development of character. At first a man is weak and fickle, and ready to conform to the standard of the particular set of minds with whom he associates. Gradually he becomes more independent, and at no small cost resolutely adopts a higher ideal. His weak will becomes strong as iron. Such a phenomenon fills us with wonder: we can scarcely credit it. Yet the analogy of the world around us might lead us to expect it. The same miracle is being wrought every spring. Like the farmer's seed, the germ of a higher life is developing. Whilst we are sleeping and waking night and day, the growth goes on—how we know not. The seed has fallen into good ground, and we see first a blade, then an ear, then the full corn in the ear. There is mystery in the process, it is true; but the same miracle confronts us wherever life is present. A farmer would be thought a fool who refused to sow his seed because he could not comprehend the law of its growth. The disciples must learn from the farmer to trust a law, the sense of which they cannot explain.

My brothers, these parables are a message of hope to you all. There is not one of you who does not wish to leave the world a little better than he found it. There is not one of you who has not striven to do so. You have, it may be, failed. You have been tempted to despair. You have felt yourself paralysed by a dead weight of evil. But I am here to-day to tell you in God's name that, though sin and death are strong, love and life are stronger. "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Do you doubt it? Easter bids you doubt no longer. It tells you that at the moment when

the Devil had won his supreme triumph, and had literally crushed out the finest and noblest life that was ever seen on earth, the victory was snatched from his hands. He was strong, but Christ was stronger. "He rose again the third day." It tells you that the same mysterious power which all through this Easter term has been silently making its presence felt in the world around you, and has been raising trees and flowers and seeds from death into newness of life, is at work not only in nature but in man. "I am the resurrection and the life." It tells you that when the harvest of the world is gathered in, it will belong to Christ. For He alone has the secret of life. The Devil can snatch away the seed. He can injure and crush and stunt its growth, but he is powerless to create. He can kill, but he cannot make alive. "He was a murderer," said Christ "from the beginning." The only reward he can offer is death and despair. "The wages of sin is death." But "I am come that they may have life and have it more abundantly". Christ is the source of life. In Him "everlasting spring abides, and never withering flowers". He will quicken and raise up the dry parched seed—how we know not. He will make it bring forth more fruit and reproduce itself thirty, sixty and a hundred times. For months it may give no sign of life. But "though it tarry, wait for it". In due season you shall reap, if you faint not. For you live in a world where life has conquered death, where love is stronger than hatred. Where there is life, there is hope. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that now goeth forth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

VII.

THE LIFE OF MAN.

"And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."—Gen. i. 27.

A PICTURE has been painted by an artist. It is a picture of a country scene, but large parts of it are blurred and imperfect. How is it to be restored? Many suggestions are made. This man would restore it in one way, that man in another. One would paint in a valley or a stream, another a mountain. But no two can agree upon what would be best. Each is dissatisfied with his neighbour's suggestions. At last a man comes forward and says—and the moment he speaks we feel that he is right—"If it is a picture drawn from nature, go back to nature. Fill it in from nature herself. Paint in simply the valleys and mountains which nature has, and not pictures suggested by your own imagination."

Human life is a picture. It also is blurred and imperfect. It also has need to be restored. Many reforms are suggested. This man has invented one scheme, that man has invented another. But the schemes are unsatisfactory and the inventors dispute among themselves. How can this picture ever be restored? In despair of all human remedies, I open my old Bible, and there, on the first page of all, I read the words: "And God said, let Us

make man in Our image, after Our likeness. . . . And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." Man is but the image of God. If so, God's life is the original, man's life is only a copy. Would you restore the picture of human life? Go back to the original. Do not restore it from your own imagination. Go back to God Himself.

But you will reply: "This is easier said than done. No one can ever see God. How then can any one tell what kind of life is the life of God? If we could only see Him, it might be useful to say, Copy Him. But as it is, He is invisible. How can a man copy what he cannot see?"

"But look," I ask you, "into your heart, and what does that say? Does not your heart tell you that God is good, and the life of God though you cannot see Him is a life of love?" "Yes," you reply, "my heart does say that sometimes, but only sometimes. For often as I look out into the world, and see so much sin and misery, and notice how good men are oppressed and bad men prosper, I cannot help saying to myself: What is the meaning of so much misery and sin? If God is Almighty, why does He allow it to continue? It seems almost as if He did not love us at all, but entirely neglected us." These are thoughts which we cannot silence, they come up again and again. The truth is that there are, as it were, two voices within us—one which tells us that the life of God is a life of unselfishness, of love, of sacrifice: another which says that it is a life of tyranny, of hatred, of selfishness. Is there no way of telling once and for all which voice is true? Cannot we by any possibility find out for certain whether God is or is not a God of love?

In ordinary life when you wish to know the truth about

a person's character, if you are a wise man you do not simply ask his neighbours what they think about him. You do not even judge him by what he says about himself. No, there is one way which is far more certain than any of these. You look not at what men say concerning him, not at what he says concerning himself, but at what he does. You judge a man by his actions. For actions speak louder than words; actions, a great man has said, are the only kind of language which seldom lies.

To-day I ask you to judge God Almighty by this same test. Do not listen to what men say about Him. Do not listen to the insinuations of the Devil. For the Devil's one work is to blacken and slander God's character. No, judge God, as you would judge a man, not even by what He says, but simply by what He has done.

If you want to see what God has done, if you want once and for all to understand His life, look at the Cross. The Cross of the Son of God is the best answer to all the insinuations of the Devil. We saw that there was much in the world to suggest that God's life is a life of kindness and of sacrifice: much to suggest that His life is a life of unkindness and of selfishness. Look at the Cross: and in a moment the answer comes from the very bottom of your heart: "God's life *is* a life of sacrifice. The Bible is right. The Devil is wrong. I cannot understand why there is so much wickedness and wretchedness in the world, but of one thing I am certain, that sacrifice and not selfishness is at the head of all. The Cross of Jesus tells me so."

Yes, you are right. The Cross speaks more loudly than any words, it tells us that God's life is a life of sacrifice. But it says more, far more besides. Sacrifice is good, but there is something much better. The cruellest

and most cynical man can scarcely help feeling that there is something very noble in sacrifice. It is a grand sight to see a man give up wealth, position, prospects, for the sake of one whom he loves. But true love demands more besides. True love says: "I do not want your money, your property. It is noble of you to give up so much. But I do not care in the least for these, unless I have—not your goods, but yourself." Yes, sacrifice is good, but self-sacrifice is infinitely better. And I look at the Cross, and as I look I learn that God's life is not only a life of sacrifice, but it is in very truth a life of self-sacrifice. For the Cross tells me that "God so loved the world, that He" did not lend, but actually "gave"—gave, never to take away again—gave "His only-begotten Son".

> Oh! 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
> The love of God to me,
> That brought my Saviour from above
> To die on Calvary.

We have looked at the picture of human life around us. We have seen that it is blurred and marred. We have seen that men have tried in vain to restore it, but that all their devices are unsatisfactory. We have in despair opened our old Bible, and have found on the first page of all the words: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him". And we have said that if this be true, then man's life is but a copy, a likeness, and God's life is the original: and that if we would restore the picture of life on earth, we must not try to do it from our own imaginations. We must fill it in from the life of God Himself. And so we have dared to look right into that life—into the very heart of God—and we have judged it by the most awful and searching of all tests—the test we do not dare apply to our own life—the simple

question: "What has He done?" What has God done? And the answer to that question is given by the Cross of the Son of God—the Cross says: "This is what He has done. He has sacrificed His own life for men. His life is a life of self-sacrifice."

Such then is the original of the picture. Such is the life of God. Now look once more at the copy—at the life of man. Your own life, is it anything like that life? Is it even the faintest copy of that life of self-sacrifice? You yourself, are you in the least like Him in whose image you are made? If not, why not? There is the original, here is the copy. Why is the copy not like the original?

I will tell you why. We have almost completely forgotten the original. We do not know God. Our lives would be different if we did. We know how to make money, we know how to strike good bargains, we know how to do business, we know our friends and our neighbours: we do not know that which is alone worth knowing. We do not know God. "The beginning and the end of what is the matter with us in these days is," says Carlyle, 'that we have forgotten God." We too often substitute religion for the knowledge of God. Know God and live. Lift up your hearts to the eternal home. Get out of your self, flee to your Father, and lose yourself in God. Is your life ruined by sin and selfishness? Do you long to restore the picture of your own life? You have tried, I am sure, again and again. You have tried, but you have never succeeded. You *cannot* restore it yourself. But, there is One Who can do for you all that you have tried and tried in vain to do. There is One Who can fill in the picture of your life. There is One Who can restore it from His own life. You wish to set your house in order.

Go then and learn from the Maker and Builder Himself what the plan of the house was intended to be.

God made us: God loves us: God claims us as His own. We simply *must* go to Him. Thou hast made us for Thyself and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee. We must learn to know God better. Every day that comes, we must know more of Him than we knew the day before. We must steadily gaze into His face: and as we gaze, we shall find that we are gradually but surely becoming like Him, being actually transformed into His image. Do look at that face. Do study the life of God. Every day your life will become a little less selfish and sluggish than the day before: every day life on earth will become more and more like life in Heaven. And at length He will call those who have tried hard to serve Him here on earth to His Home in Heaven, where we shall see Him face to face. We shall see Him. We shall be like Him. We shall see Him as He is. When we wake up in Heaven, in His image, after the likeness of His unselfish love, then and not till then shall we be eternally satisfied, for "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him".

VIII.

GOD, THE WORLD, AND THE HUMAN SOUL.

"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."—Gen. i. 26, 27.

THE Bible has two independent narratives of Creation, found respectively in the first and second chapters of Genesis. The one which we have been reading in chapel this morning is the later of the two. It did not assume its present form until centuries after the time of Moses. But when we study it and compare it with similar Babylonian traditions we see that although the shape in which it is cast is comparatively modern, yet the story itself is based upon older materials. We trace in it an attempt to give a primitive people first lessons concerning three fundamental mysteries of life—God, the World, and the Soul. Now it would be vain to put into the hands of an undeveloped race a scientific text-book or a philosophical treatise. Such works would only amaze and bewilder them. They would not help them to live better lives. In fact it would be useless to try to teach them anything which was not at once easy to remember and easy to understand.

Let us look at the first chapter of Genesis, and see whether it fulfils these conditions. And first, is it easy to remember? I think you will agree with me that it is.

The writer has taken one of the simplest divisions of time, the days of the week, and he has arranged all that he has to tell us under these divisions. To each day he has assigned a special work; and the order is such that it does not burden the weakest memory. It is roughly this: Light, Water, Land—on the first three days; Lights, things in the water, things on the land—on the next three days; Rest on the last.

Nor does it tax the understanding more than the memory. It appeals to the imagination even of a little child. Each event takes place between sunrise and sunset. When the sun goes down, and the night comes on, the world is left in darkness, till, as it were, the next slide is placed in the lantern, and the wondering gaze of primitive man is directed to a new marvel thrown upon the screen. On the first day light is made, but it reveals nothing save a watery chaos. On the second day we look again and see a great roof being made, to keep the waters in the sky from falling down on the waters below: "And God made the vault of heaven, and divided the waters which were under the vault from the waters which were above the vault: and it was so". Then on the third day there is as it were a floor placed below: "And God said, Let the dry land appear: and it was so". The world like some great house is gradually being made ready for habitation. On the fourth day it is lighted up by sun, moon and stars. Then the first inhabitants are made, until at last the abode is ready; and the noblest inmate of all—man—appears upon the scene. There are no long words, no abstract expressions. A little child could understand it. As he looked out upon the world he would feel ever afterwards that it was God's house, built by slow degrees, designed and furnished as a home for men.

But it is useless for the story to be easy to remember and easy to understand, unless it is something more besides. To be of any value it must be true. I do not mean that it need be the whole truth. The whole truth concerning the origin of matter and of life is a mystery, which baffles the ablest philosopher and the keenest scientific observer. Much less could a simple people in the childhood of the world understand its solution. But I mean that it must be true as far as it goes. The lesson may be couched in unscientific language and childish imagery, but it must be one which, when once learnt, has never entirely to be unlearnt. Let us look at what the story has to say concerning God, the World, and the Soul. Then we shall be able to see whether it fulfils this last and most important condition.

Take first its teaching concerning *God*. In striking contrast to heathen mythologies and to the very Babylonian legends upon which it is founded, it traces back everything in heaven and earth to a single source: "In the beginning God". How the Hebrews arrived at this conception we cannot say, any more than we can explain how they alone of ancient nations had at the date when this story was written gradually become convinced that this God was "irrevocably on the side of what man knows as righteousness". But I think you will allow that this is just one of those lessons which it is worth learning, because it is one which has never to be unlearnt. It does not tell man the whole truth concerning the Divine Being, but it tells him enough to deliver him from a vague, hideous dread of nature and from a superstitious adoration of the creation. It sets him free to worship a God, whom he feels that he can best please, when he too is righteous, even as God in heaven is

righteous. It starts him on the lines of a sane ethical development.

And the same is true of its information concerning the making of the *world*. If when you were a child, you had been told that there was one Almighty God who had created the universe, and you had been asked to picture the scene, would you not have thought that you were honouring God most when you represented Him as making everything in a moment of time? As it is, the writer has a conception of slow and progressive working, beginning with the material—light, land and water—rising to manifold forms of plant and animal life, culminating in human beings. This was as far as man could go at that time. It was but a little way. Yet a sound foundation had been laid, upon which further knowledge might be raised.

Last we come to His lessons concerning *man*. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, if any one had been told to construct a narrative of the creation in six days, he would assuredly have honoured man by giving him a day to himself. But the Hebrew writer—why I know not—refuses to do so. He does not deny the connection of man with the lower animals. He tells us that he was made on the same day as "cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth". Yet he also asserts that our race is supreme over all below it in the scale of creation: "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth". Our supremacy is not due to our bodily organism, which links us with nature. It is due to the fact that "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him". Here we have the boldest claim that

has ever been put forward on behalf of humanity; a claim which at the time it was made might well have seemed presumptuous and blasphemous. Yet as we look back in the light of larger experience, we feel that it has been justified and more than justified. For when at length the Perfect Man, the Ideal Man, *the* Son of Man was manifested, men realised that they saw in Him the perfect likeness of God, "the express image of His Person".

Such are the lessons which this story of creation conveys concerning God, the World, and the Soul. They are lessons which, as we have seen, were profitable for man in his infancy. But, unless I am mistaken, they are also "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come".

"In the beginning *God*." Our temptation to-day is no longer to fall down and worship the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath or in the water under the earth; but not to fall down and worship at all. We cannot prove the existence of a Supreme Being any more than we can prove the existence of our neighbour and of the external world. But life only becomes intelligible when we assume that this world and the men who people it are no mere figments of the imagination, but that they have a substantial and independent existence. In like manner the assumption that there is behind this finite order a single intelligent Will, gives a purpose, a unity, a meaning to life. It is one of those truths, whose "evidence is to be found in the light which it brings, far more than in any light which it receives". And when we go on to believe with the Hebrew prophets, that this God is irrevocably committed to the side of righteousness, justice, purity; why, life becomes not merely intelligible, but worth living. It is worth living in a world where

good is stronger than evil. It is worth struggling against any odds;

> For right is right, since God is God;
> And right the day must win;
> To doubt would be disloyalty,
> To falter would be sin.

"God created the heaven and the *earth*." We can dispense with most of the statements which this old writer makes concerning the order in which the world was formed. He seems to be right in his main idea that first came that which is material and organic, afterward that which is living, rational, personal, spiritual. But whether his idea be right or wrong, we learn such information as this in manuals of natural science better than in the pages of our Bible. For the Bible was written to teach religion not science, and it reveals nothing which man can find out by the use of his own brain. It simply tells him what he needs in order to live a godly, righteous, and sober life. It was enough for primitive man to know that the Divine method of working was through an orderly succession from the lowest to the highest.

> At the top the eternal best,
> At the bottom mere crawling slime.

The "how" of creation was not told him. He was left to find it for himself. A possible answer has of recent years been suggested by the theory of evolution. If for a moment we dare to assume that this theory is correct, then we can see that God did something not less, but far more wonderful than the writer of Genesis imagined. For He did not simply make the world, but He made the world make itself.

But the lesson in this chapter which we need most to lay to heart in our own day and generation is that which

deals with the origin of *man*. Even in old days, when the world and its inhabitants were regarded as the centre of creation, the Hebrew poet was perplexed by the insignificance of man: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou so regardest him?" To-day when we realise that we are perchance but superior mammals, and that the planet on which we spend a few fleeting years is one world out of myriad myriads which roll

> Round us, each with different powers
> And other forms of life than ours

we feel as never before the meanness of man. Yet we do well to remember that, when all is said and done, there are two characteristics of our race which cannot be explained on a naturalistic hypothesis. One is our sense of a moral law, the other our fitness for social life. The germs of these characteristics may be seen in the lower animals. Their perfection is found in man alone. And the only adequate account of their origin is that given long ago by the Hebrews: "God created man in His own image".

The highest side of the life of an individual is an image of a diviner life elsewhere. Love, sympathy, humility in man are a faint reflection of love, sympathy, humility in God.

> All fathers learn their craft from Thee;
> All loves are shadows cast
> By the beautiful, eternal hills
> Of Thine unbeginning past.

And as with the individual, so with the race. If each man is made in that image, how much more humanity

as a whole. Social life, which is slowly and painfully being developed here, is in the image of a larger, nobler social life elsewhere. We know but little of the life of God. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts". But the little that we know shows us that there is above us not a mere barren Unit, but a life in which there are what we term for lack of better words—personal existences. Three have been revealed to our finite intelligences, and these Three are perfect in a mysterious unity, which cannot be broken. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." The day will come when with clearer because less selfish vision, we shall see God. And when we see Him, "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is". We shall be like Him. We all shall be perfected into one. And the longing of Christ for our race shall be realised "that they may be one, even as 'I and the Father' are one".

I leave with you this ideal of human life. If you can see it for yourself in the dim distance; if even for a moment you can realise that your own individual life and the social order to which you belong is an image, a shadow, a representation of a diviner life elsewhere; then I shall not have spoken in vain. No man who has once seen the highest can ever forget it. The vision will haunt him. It will rise up in judgment against him, when he is untrue to his better self. It will be a presence not to be put by. It will deepen his faith in human nature. It will inspire him with hope for himself and the race to which he belongs. Above all, it will lead him away from the blurred and distorted likeness of God,

which he sees within and around him, to the perfect image of the visible God—to the Man Christ Jesus. "On account of His immeasurable love He became what we are, that He might make us what He is." When we wake up in heaven after His likeness in the image of His own love, then and not until then shall we be eternally, completely satisfied; "for God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him".

IX.

CONSCIENCE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

"And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"—Gen. iii. 9.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?"—Gen. iv. 9.

MATTHEW ARNOLD was never tired of reminding us that whilst we go back to the ancient Greeks for lessons in art and beauty and culture, we must go to the Hebrews for instruction in religion and conduct. Every one now agrees that he was right. We feel that the Hebrew people had a genius for religion. We can trace it all through their literature. Whatever be the subject-matter —whether it be poetry, history, philosophy, legend or imaginative prose—when touched by the Hebrew genius it is charged with a passion for righteousness, and becomes a vehicle for lessons concerning ethics and religion which are the permanent heritage of the race. Gradually as the people developed and became self-conscious, the best of them felt that this national genius was not theirs by accident, but that they had as it were a mission for the world—to teach men to know God. And they looked forward to the day when the earth should be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea.

I need therefore offer no apology for asking you to consider two early fragments of their folklore. The

origin of these legends is lost in dim obscurity: they were probably not peculiar to the Hebrew people, but the common heritage of the Semitic family to which they belonged. But Hebrew prophets seized upon them, and transformed them into pictures concerning God and His dealings with men. Like wise teachers, they knew that "Where truth in closest words shall fail" there "truth embodied in a tale" may "enter in at lowly doors".

The first scene introduces us to an enchanted garden, where there are wonder-working trees, a talking serpent, and strange half-human forms with a sword of fire. Thus far the story reads like any piece of ancient folklore. But suddenly we discover that we are listening not to a fairy tale but to a sermon by a singularly able preacher on the deepest mysteries of human life. We are presented with a portrait of the nature and effects of sin, of man's disobedience and forgetfulness of his Maker, of the effect which self-will inevitably produces in alienating man from God. We are shown that sin is not a necessary constituent of human nature, but that it comes from yielding to a craving for a false independence, from listening to the suggestions of a lower, alien, animal, malignant will. Before the sermon ends, the preacher has thrown out a vague mysterious hope that man although vanquished now shall yet be victor,

> that flesh and blood,
> Which did in Adam fail,
> Should strive afresh against the foe,
> Should strive and should prevail.

I have not time to dwell upon these and other lessons which this story contains, but there is one point to which I would specially draw your attention; and that is the sense which the writer has of what we should now call

individual responsibility. When the glamour of temptation is gone, the still small voice of conscience is heard: or—to use the language of the old Hebrew prophet, which is bolder and simpler than modern equivalents: "they heard the voice of Jehovah walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah amongst the trees of the garden. And Jehovah called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

The next legend is so fragmentary, as to be in places almost incomprehensible. But its main drift is clear. It deals with a more developed stage in social life. We are no longer in a mystic garden with a solitary man and woman, but a step has been made in the education of the race. A new relationship has come into existence—that of brotherhood. The relationship has been mercilessly violated. The elder brother has murdered the younger. Again conscience asserts its claims, but this time a conscience which deals not only with a man's responsibility for his own actions, but which looks to the effect of those actions upon his neighbour. "And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" And Jehovah said unto Cain, "Cursed art thou".

"Where art thou? . . . Where is thy brother?" In these two simple questions the old Hebrew writer summed up what seemed to him the fundamental demands which heaven made upon human beings. A man must answer to God for himself and also for his neighbour. No one could sin against his own or his brother's soul with impunity. Jehovah saw and judged.

The stories in which he expressed his ethical and religious convictions are so childlike, that you may in your wisdom be inclined to put them on one side, and to relegate them to the neglected literature of the nursery. But whether you do so or not, remember one fact. The convictions which they embody are true for all time. God makes upon you and me precisely the same demands as He made upon primitive man in the infancy of the race. As then, so now, He asks what we are doing first with our own, secondly with our brother's life.

First with our own. "Where art thou?" You smile at the simplicity of the man who hid himself behind trees, and thought that if he did not see Jehovah, Jehovah would not see him. But have you never done the same? Have you never tried to escape from His presence by devoting yourself with feverish anxiety to the distractions of the hour, to exercise of mind and body, to social intercourse, to anything but solitary communion with the other world, and then fondly imagined that since you had ceased to think of God, God had ceased to think of you. You have resented the interference of conscience as an uninvited and unwelcome guest. You would fain be free from its gloomy tyranny, and live a happy, careless, animal existence. Yet, believe me, that your conscience is your one hope. It is a witness to the greatness of your destiny. It is a protest that you were made for better things, that you were created in God's image, that He will not let you go until He has fashioned you after His likeness. It is the voice, not as the old Jew thought of an angry Judge, but, as the Gospel tells us, of a Father who has missed His child, and is seeking him in a far country, and will not rest, until He find him. There is no place like home, and our only home is God. "Thou madest us," said St.

Augustine, "for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it rest in Thee." "Too late have I loved Thee, Thou Beauty so ancient and so new; too late have I loved Thee."

But conscience has other claims upon us. It is not satisfied with the fact that we ourselves are endeavouring to live as sons of God. It makes a further demand: "Where is thy brother?" In old days the conception of brotherhood was limited to a small, clearly defined social group. Yet even primitive man felt that the God of the family would speedily avenge any act which threatened its sanctity. Christianity has emphasised and enlarged the conception of Brotherhood. It has revealed the underlying unity, or, to use our modern phraseology, the solidarity of humanity. "We being many are one." It has insisted that the main purpose of life is not the salvation of the soul, but the loving of self in the larger life of mankind. "Whosoever," said Jesus Christ, "seeketh to save his soul shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose it for My sake shall save it." It has made known to us the one increasing purpose of the ages, whereby God is making not millions of perfect individuals, but one new Man. It bids us look forward with sure and certain hope to the ultimate unity of humanity, when, in the words of our poet,

> The people all are one, and all their voices join in choric
> Hallelujah to the Maker, "It is finish'd. Man is made."

"Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The day will yet dawn, when the apostle's words shall be fulfilled, and "we shall all come," not unto perfect men, but "unto a perfect Man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ".

To train men to realise this stupendous ideal, to give them first lessons in unity, God has knit them together by

ties which cannot be broken. He has made each man, whether he will or no, a member of a particular family and of a particular nation. Thus he is put in training for a richer, fuller social life elsewhere. Here we see the first rudimentary stages of his education. He is feebly yearning after unity, dimly apprehending the meaning of sacrifice, slowly grasping the ideal of brotherhood. But God has more worlds than one. And what He hath begun here, He is able to perfect hereafter.

There are other ways in which God is specially impressing this lesson on our own day and generation, so that men of divers schools of thought are beginning to recognise as never before the solidarity of mankind. There is only one to which I would direct your attention this morning, because it is that which immediately concerns you, which forces itself upon your notice by the very conditions of your life at Cambridge. At the east end of this chapel are two words, written in letters of gold, words which I trust you will not forget as long as you are with us, because they sum up shortly and simply the reason why this college exists: "Unum Corpus". We are not a collection of isolated individuals, but One Body, in which each member is dependent for his health and vitality upon every other member. It is true of a college as of a Church, "We being many are one". I do not believe that our colleges at Oxford and Cambridge would have lasted among the sundry and manifold changes of the modern world had not God purposed by these unique institutions to train, year by year, members of the Anglo-Saxon race to learn certain lessons which they could not be taught elsewhere. There are no places where we can grasp more easily and naturally the lesson of unity. In a college as nowhere else one may learn that we are

members one of another, and that no man liveth to himself. Larger than a family, far smaller than a nation —a college stands as a training ground between the two. It is large enough to give some slight conception of the infinitely varied activities of corporate life; small enough to command a peculiar loyalty and devotion. It stands midway between schooldays and the busy rush of the outside world. We have now larger liberty than we had at school, and therefore greater scope for the development of our faculties. At the same time we have restrictions which will not meet us in later life, in order that we may learn—what Englishmen as a rule are slow to learn—that corporate life is based on self-discipline and sacrifice.

On the day when you joined this college, you formed a new relationship. When you were born into a human family, you were too young to grasp the position in which you found yourself. But with growing consciousness came a growing perception of what it was to be a son or a brother. Now you are given a more advanced lesson in corporate life, and you are of an age to realise its meaning and the responsibilities which it involves. You have become a member of a Body which has been quietly growing from generation to generation. Or ever you were born, thousands of noble and pure souls have lived and worked and struggled within these walls. They are bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. "They be of them that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported. And some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished, as though they had never been born. . . . But these were merciful men, whose righteousness hath not been forgotten." They did what they could to make life stronger, manlier, nobler, and their work is not in vain. They have left a legacy of honesty,

purity, sacrifice, which remains as the perpetual inspiration of the Body. "And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth." Ye are come "to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours".

You and I will soon pass away, and our place shall know us no more. Most of us will have no memorial. We shall perish, as though we had never been born.

> And no one will ask
> Who or what we have been,
> More than he asks what waves,
> In the moonlit solitudes mild
> Of the midmost ocean, have swelled,
> Foamed for a moment, and gone.

But although our names are forgotten, our influence remains. We shall leave our colleges better or worse than we found them. If we have lived a pure and unselfish life, it will be easier for those who come after us to do the same. Other men will enter into our labours, and will reap that whereon they have bestowed no labour.

The lot has fallen unto you in a fair place, yea, you have a goodly heritage. College life presents a unique opportunity. How are you going to use it? The fool hath said in his heart: "I have no influence worth mentioning. I am a plain man without exceptional ability. I am too insignificant to affect the lives of others." As he says these words, he congratulates himself on his modesty, and perchance he intends to make this modesty a cloak for inaction, slothfulness, or self-indulgence. "Weep for the dead," said a wise man long ago, "for he hath lost the light: and weep for a fool, for he wanteth understanding: make little weeping for the dead, for he is at rest: but the life of a fool is worse than death. Seven days do men mourn

for him that is dead; but for a fool and an ungodly man all the days of his life. What is heavier than lead? And what is the name thereof but a fool?" So far from the foolish body who thus speaks being humble and modest, he is taking upon himself to criticise the Almighty, he is making as though he knew better than his Creator. God would not have made any of us, if He had not a use for us. He has made you just as you are, and placed you here; because He wanted you and no one else to do one small piece of work in building up the Body. You are the best conceivable instrument for performing the special task He has set you to do. You are necessary for the perfection of the whole. "God hath set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." Are you conscious of weakness and feebleness? Listen to the words of St. Paul: "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary".

I entreat you once and for all to give up this mischievous and false humility. You may deceive yourself; you may deceive your neighbour. But the day is coming when you will be judged not by yourself, not by your neighbour, but by your God. And "God is not mocked". He will call you to give account not only for your own but for your brother's soul. You may possess no great intellectual power, no striking social gifts. But you have one or two men whom you know well, and whom you must be influencing for good or for evil. And when you appear before the presence of God, He will ask you what you have done to help them. His question to you will be, "Where is thy brother?" And if your only answer is that of Cain: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" God's only answer to you will be that which He gave to Cain, "Cursed art thou".

The tragedy of life is that, whether we will or no, we are our brother's keeper—that none of us can perish alone in his iniquity. Make shipwreck of your own life, and you destroy your brother's also. But if it is the tragedy, thank God it is also the inspiration of life. Live a true life yourself and you are helping others to do the same. You need never in the whole course of your existence speak a single word to any one on the subject of religion. If you live in the fear and love of God, your life speaks louder than words. What you are thunders so loud that men cannot hear what you say. No silent prayer to do right, no solitary struggle after a higher ideal is lost. You are helping others more than yourself. The health of the Body depends upon the health of the feeblest members. For we being many are one.

"For their sakes," said Jesus Christ, "I sanctify Myself." For the sake of others lead the best life that you can. If you help one single man to realise his ideal, will not that be the thing which will best and longest please you? When you reach the eternal home, you will have not only his undying thanks, but—what is better—the approval of the Master Himself: "Come ye, blessed of My Father. . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brothers, ye have done it unto Me."

X.

THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."—St. Luke. vii. 23.

We all acknowledge the nobility of the character of Christ, we allow that He is the highest type of humanity, that if we would see man at his best, we must go back to the life of the Son of Man. But when we have made this admission, honesty forces us to confess that sometimes other lives attract us more than His. We admire qualities in friends or acquaintances, which are not to be seen in Jesus of Nazareth. Judged by this standard, such men are weighed and found wanting. Yet we feel more drawn towards them than towards the Master. We know that Jesus is incomparably better than they are. But they seem so human, so like ourselves, that they appeal to us more. The ideal figure of the Son of Man fades into its background. Our practical worship and homage is given to lesser men.

The reason is not far to seek. We need educating before we can appreciate the character of Jesus. You know that if a man has never seen any but inferior pictures, he has no pleasure in the highest works of human genius. Show him one of Raphael's masterpieces, and it does not appeal to him. He sees that it is wonderful,

and he knows that he ought to admire it. He may pretend that he does: he may use complimentary epithets. But say what he will with his lips, in his heart he craves for something more homely. The other is too high for him, he cannot attain unto it. So it is when we are shown the portrait of Christ. He is too unlike the men whom we know, to appeal to us. "When He stands among the people, He is higher than any of the people." We may feign admiration: we may speak of Him as our ideal. But what does it profit us, if we ignore the ideal in practical life? Jesus will have no such compliments. "Good Master, what shall I do?" And the brusque reply comes back, "Why callest thou Me *good?*" What He said to that young man, He says to you and to me: "I do not ask for compliments. Not every one that calleth Me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom."

Now a man may do good work in the world with little or no artistic taste. But if his moral taste is defective, there will be a flaw in all that he undertakes. For a man becomes what he admires. If he admires the wrong thing, he becomes the wrong thing. He does not rise higher than his ideal. If he takes as his ideal a type of manhood which is not the highest, he condemns himself to mediocrity, inferiority. He is a second-rate man, and will do second-rate work in the world.

When a man wishes to educate his artistic taste, he goes and studies the old Masters. Would you train your moral sense—your conscience? Study the Master. Look at Him, or—as the Bible says—learn Him. Do not despair, if He does not appeal to you. He is a new creation, God's fresh revelation of manhood. There must therefore be that in His character which an uneducated taste fails to take in. "The natural man receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God." Be patient. You will not understand Him at once. You will see some traits that attract you, others that are strange and forbidding. But as you stand and gaze and gaze at the features, they will grow more human, more tender, more beautiful; the hardness will melt away, and you will see "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ".

No one knew better than Christ Himself the impression which His portrait would leave upon each generation in turn. As He looked right down through the centuries upon men yet unborn, and saw one after another coming up to the portrait, studying the new ideal of manhood, and going away disappointed, He pronounced a special benediction upon any who could stand before the Son of Man and take no offence: "Blessed is he whoscever shall not be offended in Me".

Each age has its own peculiar sympathies and antipathies. What offended the men of His time, even His best friends, was a suspicion of weakness in the face. It is true that at first they were impressed by His independence, by His superhuman power; but later they were disappointed at His childlike helplessness. He had done much for others: He could do nothing for Himself. At the supreme crisis His energy seemed to go. He was paralysed. He was "as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb". To-day we contemplate the finished portrait, we see that the judgment of His contemporaries was hasty and superficial. We realise that what they took for weakness was strength in disguise. There is a self-restraint, a reserve power which strikes us with awe. The self-sacrifice of Him, Who saved others, but could not save Himself is to our eyes sublime. Nor can we stint our admiration of the

courage which faced ridicule, ignominy, death with quiet faith in the future: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me".

Yet when we have done justice to the strength of the character, there is something in the portrait which offends us. Each age, as I have said, has its own peculiar sympathies and antipathies. A cursory glance at the picture gives us Englishmen the same kind of impression as we derive from many a painting of the old masters. There is strength in the Face, but it is too cold, too saintly, too unworldly, too religious, to suit our modern taste. We have not the religious genius of the Easterns or even of some of the southern nations of Europe. It is not that we are devoid of ideals, but religion does not bulk large in our life. We wish that the character were more practical, more like human nature as we know it. It is not, we feel, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. It presents a conception of manhood which appeals only to a limited section of the community. It suits a few pious souls; it is a useful ideal for a clergyman; but can an ordinary man be expected to take it as a model? Religion is good in its place, but can it take the first place? Jesus said that it could, that it must: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God". Before you condemn the ideal as unnatural, I ask you to look more closely at what you are condemning. Study the religion of Jesus, and it may be that you will find it more human than you imagine. Part of your objection to religion arises from the fact that it has made some folk whom you have met hard, constrained, unsympathetic, unsociable. It had no such effect upon Jesus Christ. He is simple and natural. He mixes freely with ordinary men. Indeed He was accused of being fond of low company, and of eating and

drinking in excess: "Behold, a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners".

I do not think we need be offended at the religious side of Christ's life. I am sure that if you want His strength, you must have His religion. I do not want you to appear religious or to talk religion. But we want to have our life rooted in God, to pray as naturally as we breathe, to be able to say with Christ: "My meat is to do God's will".

Go back to the primitive portrait of Christ. Correct and revise your provincial ideal of manhood. Make place for religion. Nay, give religion the first place. If you find it hard to educate yourself to appreciate this side of Christ's life, do not despair. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me". God grant that the blessing may be yours.

But you may well say, What is the use of such advice? I cannot become a painter by studying Raphael's pictures; neither can I become a saint by looking at the portrait of Christ. Such a sight may educate my moral taste, but it will not make me a better man. To paint like Raphael, I must have Raphael's genius: to look like Christ, I must have, if I may use the word, the genius of Christ. I want His mind, His will, His energy. These I cannot gain by reading His life. If you can tell me how that genius can fire me, then you may bid me study the portrait. Otherwise, the study only drives me to despair.

Have you forgotten that when Jesus ascended into heaven He promised you His secret, His energy, His inspiration? He left you His genius. But He did not call it by that name; He used a better and a simpler

word. Genius is a vague, lifeless abstraction. What Jesus promised was His Spirit. That is a living, personal Being. That Spirit can make your life, not a mere artificial copy, not a mechanical reproduction of the life of Christ, but a new picture by the same artist. True to His promise, the Spirit of Jesus came—came never to leave the world again. He is here to-day. He is in us. All that is worth having in our character we owe to Him.

> And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness
> Are His alone.

I bid you study the portrait of Christ, and correct thereby your crude conceptions of manhood. I bid you study it, because I know that the same inspiration that painted the portrait is in you. You must not despair. You have but to yield to the Spirit, and you too will be able to say with St. Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me". How He works I know not; "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou dost not know whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

XI.

UNITY THROUGH SELF-SACRIFICE.

"There is one body and one Spirit."—Eph. iv. 4.

ST. PAUL is writing from the imperial city of Rome a circular letter to the Christians of Asia Minor. It is a letter which he wishes to be read by each Christian community in turn. He deals therefore with matters not of passing controversy, but of permanent importance. He sums up the lessons of a lifetime. He has thought out his position slowly and painfully. Like any truth worth having, it has been gained with the sweat of his brow. The truth which he enunciates is this: True human life is based not upon selfishness, but upon sacrifice. Its ideal is not, Each for self, but, Each for all, and all are one in Christ—one Body possessed by one Spirit of unselfishness. We being many are one Body.

The words are mystical, and the plain man hates mysteries. He hates to be asked to think. But have you ever observed how in some crisis of your life familiar words, to which you have given but little serious thought, suddenly come back to you, and light up with a real meaning? Simple, easy-going philosophy gives way, and you are forced back upon deep, mysterious truth. In the crisis of a nation's life the same law holds good. We ask ourselves what it all means. We go down below the

surface of things, and wonder whether it is a fact, as men of the world quietly assume it to be, that competition and selfishness are the fundamental laws of national life, or whether the mysterious teaching of the Bible is true, "No man liveth to himself," "We being many are one body".

During the closing years of this century God has given us Englishmen two object-lessons, to teach us the meaning of national life—lessons so startling that even the dullest imagination cannot fail to be stirred. When two and a half years ago our Queen rode through the streets of London, full of days and riches, the nation as one man delighted to do her honour.

> A thousand claims to reverence closed
> In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen.

With a common instinct her children from far and near rose up and called her blessed. Ancient barriers of class, of party, and of prejudice were broken down. As the long procession passed along the streets, young and old, rich and poor, shared alike in a common joy. We were proud of our country, proud of our Queen. And we did well to be proud. For the sight upon which we gazed was without a parallel in the history of mankind. Soldiers and rulers from distant colonies taught us that England was no mere nation, but a mother of nations. We had before our eyes for the first time a brotherhood of nations, each member of the brotherhood free and independent, yet each bound to the other and to the old country by a common language, a common loyalty, a common God. We being many were one.

If we realised our unity then, we realise it more now. Whatever be the causes which have led us into war, there is not one of us who is not agreed upon this. It has done us all good. It has brought us together as, humanly

speaking, nothing else could have done. The noblest and the humblest, the richest and the poorest, are taking their share. The nation is moved as one man. The loyalty of the colonies has been tested, and has stood the test. England did not ask them for money or for men. They thrust offers of help upon her, until at length she could no longer refuse. For all this we thank God. We thank Him that He has taught us that even if we would, we cannot, we dare not, live to ourselves—that the mother country can no longer, as in days gone by, say to her children over the seas: I have no need of you; nor yet the children say to their Mother: We have no need of thee. In joy, in sorrow, in life, in death we being many are one.

"There is one Body and one Spirit." But the spirit which animates us to-day is not quite the same as that which animated us a couple of years ago. If we were over-confident then, who shall blame us? We were, we could not help being, impressed by the pomp of that Procession and all that the pomp implied. We felt, and rightly felt, how fair was our lot, how goodly was our heritage. We realised that England had a unique position in the world, and therefore a unique opportunity. A splendid future opened before her. One solemn voice indeed was raised in warning. It made itself heard, for it came not from a professional moralist or preacher, but from our great imperial poet. With prophetic insight he bade us remember the God of our fathers, from whom our heritage was derived. Else

> All our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
> Judge of the nations—spare us yet—
> Lest we forget—lest we forget.

To-day we need no prophet's voice to sober us. This war has made us think. It is not that we believe one whit less in the future of England—in the mission which lies before her. Only we have found that the work which is given us to do—which, please God, we will do before long—is harder than we thought. We have learned that it cannot be done without loss—without sacrifice. I dare not trust myself to speak of that sacrifice. It comes home to some of us too closely. It is too deep for words. But as I think of the silent courage manifested in thousands of English homes, here and beyond the seas, where the mother has bidden the son go, though she may never in this world see his face again; I feel that God is with us yet. For that courage must come direct from God. That sacrifice must be inspired by Him Who did not withhold His only Son. I cannot understand why God is calling for such sacrifice from the innocent and the helpless. But this much I know. He is only asking us to do what He Himself has done. He is teaching us that as in heaven, so on earth life is based on sacrifice. He is calling us to come up higher and enter into His own mysterious life. Yes, the Lord our God is with us, as He was with our fathers. He is making us, as He made the Elder Brother of the race, "perfect through suffering". The spirit of sacrifice is cleansing—and they sorely needed cleansing—our nation and our Empire. For the sufferings of a few are the sufferings of all. "God," says St. Paul, "hath tempered the Body together. And if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."

"Unum corpus et unus spiritus." The words, since I last spoke to you, have been written up on the walls of our Chapel. They are there to remind you each time you enter the building of what I verily believe is *the* lesson

of College life: "No man liveth to himself". In a few short years at the most you will be scattered throughout England and her possessions over the seas. Do not, I implore you, go away without having mastered the lesson which this place has to teach you. How is it that we meet in the Colonies so many failures—so many men who degrade the name of Englishman by living undisciplined, self-seeking lives? It is because these men have neglected to learn self-discipline and self-sacrifice in the old country, and they find it impossible to acquire the habits in new and rough surroundings, away from the purifying influence of home. If you will not learn the lesson now, there is little hope of your learning it later. Here is your opportunity. You are a member of a Body which God hath tempered together. He has been tempering it for well-nigh four hundred years. Here you breathe in a spirit of self-sacrifice and self-discipline—the slow and patient growth of centuries. That spirit is stronger, thank God, to-day than ever before. One generation after another has helped to develop it. Not one true and unselfish life passed within these walls has been in vain. Not one conquest over self by men whose very names are now forgotten, but has permanently enriched this place. We are the heirs of all the past. Other men have laboured, and we are entered into their labours. There is a Spirit working here, which—if you will but drink into it—will purify and strengthen your whole being. It is no vague, impersonal influence of which I am speaking. It is the Spirit of the living God. Surely you cannot resist Him. Surely, when you know how much depends upon self-discipline, you will not deliberately refuse to practise it. Do not wait till a more convenient season. Begin now. Begin not with

some grand scheme of reformation, but with some very small detail in your life. Set that right, and the rest of your life will come right in time. For self-discipline acts according to the law of the kingdom of heaven laid down by the Master Himself. It "is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened". I know that it involves sacrifice. But can you tell me anything worth doing which does not involve sacrifice? Is there any true life here or elsewhere which is not based upon sacrifice? Selfishness is the life of hell: sacrifice the life of heaven.

Do you say, "But what can I do? If I do begin to learn the lesson of sacrifice, of what use is it? I have no influence to speak of. I have no special powers of mind or of body. I can do nothing for the College compared with the great men of the past. I am neither a saint nor a genius." I reply: "God needs your help in perfecting the Body. Otherwise you would not be here. 'Now hath God set the members every one of them in the Body as it hath pleased Him.' You may be feeble, but you are as necessary for the perfection of the whole, as a Milton or a Darwin, a Cudworth or a More. Listen to the words of the Apostle, and take comfort from them. 'Nay,' says St. Paul, 'much more those members of the Body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.'"

XII.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

"And I answered, Who art thou? And he said unto me, I am Jesus."
—Acts xxii. 8.

WE devote half the Sundays in every year to commemorating the main events of the life of Christ. We dwell in turn upon His birth, death, resurrection and ascension. When Whitsunday comes, we pass from His own life to the life of the Society which He founded. We celebrate to-day the Birthday of the Christian Church.

The story of the early Church is told in the Acts of the Apostles. At first sight this book appears dull in comparison with the thrilling narrative of the Gospels. We gaze upon that cloud which received Jesus out of human sight with wistful and impatient eyes. The hope of the race is gone: the marvellous revelation is at an end. We return once more to the common life of earth. For a time indeed there are signs that heaven is still near to earth. There are miracles—men speaking with tongues, healing the sick and raising the dead. But these are not destined to last, and they grow fewer as the book draws to its close.

The disciples of a great man are as a rule less interesting than their master. Even a St. Paul and a St. John fail to inspire us as fully as the Lord Himself. We are

sometimes almost tempted to wish that the Bible ended when the cloud received the Master.

If the book of the Acts were simply the history of disciples closely attached to a Master who had left them, I think we should be justified in regarding it as of minor importance. We should be right in feeling that the festival which we are celebrating to-day is not to be compared in its human interest with Christmas or Easter.

But before we pass a hasty judgment on St. Luke's work, let us be certain that we have grasped the meaning of its contents. The author does not call the book by the name with which we are familiar. He does not profess to be writing "the Acts of the Apostles". The present title is to all appearance the addition of a later scribe. St. Luke speaks of it in his preface as the second part of a previous work, as the continuation of a former treatise concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day in which He was taken up. The hero of the work is St. Paul. His life's journeys are narrated at length. If you look for a moment at what St. Luke tells us of him, you will understand the purpose of the rest of the book. We see him first as a young man. He is watching the murder of Stephen. The murderers "laid down their garments at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul". We see him next arresting Christians in their own homes. "As for Saul, he made havock of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison." He leaves Jerusalem with warrants against the Christians beyond the limits of Palestine. Then comes the scene which changes his whole life. He hears a voice from heaven—not remonstrating with him for his cruelty in injuring helpless men and women, but bringing against

him the most inexplicable charge: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" No wonder that he answered in astonishment: "Who art Thou?" The answer came back which he could not understand at the time, but learned to appreciate later: "I am Jesus". He thought that he had been insulting Stephen, and punishing hateful fanatics. He found that he had been attacking some one completely different: "I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest".

"I am Jesus." These three words, explain the book of the Acts better than volumes of commentaries. They give it a living interest. We see now why St. Luke regards it as the second part of his Gospel. It is the second part, because it is a continuation of the life of Jesus. It is the life which He lives in men like ourselves.

The sufferings of the Lord were not ended when He breathed His last upon the Cross. He suffers again in the life of His Church. To injure the weakest member of it is to injure Him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." He was living in those disciples whom Saul was haling to prison: "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." He was living in St. Paul himself, when he in turn was called upon to suffer. "Now I rejoice," he says, "in my sufferings, and I do my part to fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ."

Christ did not leave the world when He ascended into heaven. On the contrary He began to live a larger life, clothing Himself with a more wonderful body than that which He had assumed in the days of His flesh. "We," says St. Paul, "are His body." As we read the Acts, we find Him still going about and doing good. But now His acts of mercy extend over a wider area, for

He is using human beings as His instruments—as His hands and His feet.

Have you ever noticed that the Acts of the Apostles never ends? There is no formal conclusion. It breaks off suddenly in the Greek with an adverb. The reason is not far to find. When St. Luke laid down his pen, Christ's life was still unfinished, He was going about and doing good.

Sometimes when men look back to these primitive days, and contrast them with the days in which their lot has been cast, they are inclined to despair. The Church to-day has but little resemblance to the Church of the Apostles. They long for the innocence and simplicity of its childhood. For my own part I thank God that I have been born in these latter days. For the life of Christ on earth to-day is larger and richer than in the time of the Apostles. The Body has grown from childhood to manhood. Yet He remains the same: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever".

He comes and says to us, as He said to St. Paul: "I am Jesus. I am still living in the world. I am desirous to make use of you. My Body is incomplete without you. You have some special function to perform. I must have you. I will transform you, as I transformed the Apostle Paul. I will develop all that is best in you. You shall lose your life in Me. You shall no longer be selfish and isolated, but a member of My own Body. You shall help Me to work out My purpose for the race. You shall share in My sufferings and My labours. And when at last I triumph, the triumph will be yours as well as Mine."

When St. Paul heard that appeal for the first time, he gave a practical reply. He said: "What shall I do,

Lord?" If you hear the appeal, do not trifle with it. If you do, it will grow fainter and fainter as years go on. Remember that the same lips which say "Come unto Me" can also say "Depart from Me . . . I never knew you". If you refuse the work which you have been asked to do, another—purer, simpler and nobler than yourself—will be raised up in your place—you are not indispensable. If you fail, the work will be done without you, the Body will attain its full stature. You will be cut off as a useless limb. I know no more terrible punishment than this—to see God's purposes for humanity worked out and to have no share in their accomplishment. If you despise your birthright, I cannot tell you whether you will ever find a place of repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears.

But surely you cannot resist the appeal. Surely your reply will take the same practical shape as St. Paul's: "What shall I do, Lord?" He will show you what to do. At first it will be hard to do anything. You will move slowly and painfully in His service as a limb that has been long disused. But as His strong life communicates itself to you, strength and vigour will return. You will find that His service is perfect freedom. You will share in the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of His Body. You will shake off the numbness of death. You will be able to say with ever fuller meaning: "I live"—and "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me".

"And He said unto me, I am Jesus . . . and I said, What shall I do, Lord?"

XIII.

THE SECRET OF ST. PAUL'S INFLUENCE.

"Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power."—1 Thess. i. 5.

We have been reading the account of St. Paul's work in Europe. We are so accustomed to the story, that we are liable to forget the difficulty of the task. I do not now refer to difficulties of travelling (though they were considerable), but to a difficulty greater and more formidable. If the journey presented difficulties, the people to whom he came must have presented more. We find it hard enough to influence our fellow-countrymen, with whom we have been brought up. But here was a man who had spent his life in the East. He had everything against him. He was a member of the most exclusive sect of an exclusive nation—a Jew, who was despised by all other nations; a Pharisee. It must have been hard indeed for such a man to gain a hearing in the Western world.

And yet the astonishing fact is that this Jew—this patriotic Jew—was at home, more at home amongst traders in Corinth, thinkers in Athens, practical men of the world in Rome, than with his own countrymen. We sometimes test a man's power by his capability of influencing others—by seeing whether he can rise to an occasion.

St. Paul was a man of power. In no other case do we read of any one doing what he did. We hear of no one else going from city to city—from nation to nation—entering a city without knowing one single face, leaving it with hundreds of men and women who would thank God throughout eternity that they had ever seen him. Truly he was a man of power.

As we begin to grasp this fact of St. Paul's unique influence, we naturally ask: What was the secret of his power—was it anything that we can to some measure gain for ourselves, or was it something entirely peculiar to him?

Some would tell us that he was a man of commanding presence. But it is almost certain that he was not. Tradition speaks of him as a man of mean appearance, and he himself complains of some physical deformity, or, as he pathetically says, "a thorn in the flesh".

Nor was he a man of remarkable eloquence. In the same letter in which he speaks of the thorn in the flesh, he also deals with a charge which was brought against him. The charge was this: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech —contemptible". Clearly his power did not lie here.

Even if you point to his Epistles, and say that they are the most wonderful letters that have ever been written, yet you must remember that letters by themselves would not have been enough. He had first to convert the men and women before he wrote the letters—and to do that he had to come into contact with them, and influence them face to face.

Where then did his secret lie? I think we shall see this most clearly if we look at the man in one of the first European towns that he ever visited—the town of Thes-

salonica. He stayed there for some three weeks. He had never, as far as we know, set foot in the place before. He spoke to strangers whom he had never seen before. The message was entirely new. He is not reported to have done a single miraculous work here. What is the result? I give it in his own words—in a letter that he wrote later on to the people of Thessalonica:—

"Our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power . . . and ye became imitators of us and of the Lord . . . ye turned to God, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven".

A strange result of some three weeks' work! Men gave up the habits of a lifetime, the prejudices of years, and began (as he says) to imitate him and the Lord of whom he spoke. Think of it! Europeans copying an unknown, a despised, an insignificant-looking Jew! Heathen copying his Master, of whom they had never heard before, who had died but a few years before, the death reserved for slaves and felons. How did he make them do it? What was the secret of the man?

Once again I ask you to look at his own words—taken from this same letter:—

"We became gentle among you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children; even so is our yearning for you, we were well pleased to impart unto you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own souls, because ye became very dear to us. For ye remember, brothers, our labour and our toil: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. . . . As ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you." Here was his secret. The men to whom he spoke had heard greater eloquence before,

they had listened to great doctrines, to divine philosophy. But here stood a *man*—a man who had come all that way because he loved them—a man who yearned not simply to impart a gospel-message, but to give them his own soul—a man to whom each one of them was as dear as the child is to the mother who cherishes it, as the son is to his own father. As such a man told them of a Master Who had put it into his heart to come long, weary miles to them—as with tears in his eyes he implored them to walk worthily of God Who had called them to His kingdom, they were touched as they could not have been touched otherwise. They felt as he spoke that he had a real interest in their lives, an unselfish longing to see them better and purer. They felt that if his crucified Lord had made this man so earnest, so unselfish, so affectionate, there must be something in his message. And so they listened, and as they listened they were convinced.

This then is the secret—the simple secret—of St. Paul —his love for those to whom he spoke.

My brothers, God has called you and me to take part in the same work which St. Paul began—to extend the Kingdom of God in this Western world of Europe. In many respects our work is not nearly as difficult as his was. We labour amongst men whose life, whose customs, whose modes of thought we know. In some respects we may have difficulties to contend with, which St. Paul had not. For we have to work amongst those who are familiar with the sound of the message, but in whom familiarity has led to contempt or indifference. But whatever are our difficulties or encouragements, whatever be the class of men amongst whom God has called us to work, of one thing we may be certain that if we are

to do any real work in the world, we must learn St. Paul's secret. Our capacity to help and raise those with whom we come in contact depends upon our sympathy for them. You may have the grandest of messages, the most glorious of gospels; but if you have not that sympathy, you will not touch the hearts of men. The difference between one man's work and another's does not so much depend upon the type of message as upon the men themselves. One man speaks to another perhaps eloquently and even very earnestly—but he speaks as a stranger and outsider. He does not enter into the life and struggles of him to whom he speaks. He convinces the head—and he who hears feels that he ought to live a better life, but refuses to do so. The other may not be gifted with words, he may have small powers of reasoning, an imperfect grasp of theology, but what he does say comes from the heart. He has a passionate yearning that the man should know the God Who has been everything to him. He will not rest content until he does. He is determined to devote every power that he has to the task. He lives for the man. He enters into his life. He is interested in all in which the other is interested. He loves the man. Such a man, and such a man only, is a winner of souls.

But you say, how can I get this power? How can I give this sympathy? How can I enter into the life of those with whom I work? How can I live for them? I cannot control my feelings. I cannot take interest in each one. I cannot make myself love them against my will. My brothers, I am sure you cannot. But there is one way of gaining this power. The way to gain this unselfish sympathy, this love, this passionate earnestness, is by prayer. You do not feel as much interest as you could wish in another. Pray for him. Pray for those whom

you find it hard to understand and influence. If you are wishing to help another, pray for him—and your interest in him will increase. Pray not for one or two minutes. But give up some considerable time. You may have tried speaking and not succeeded. There is a greater power than words—that is prayer. And as you pray you will gradually find that your interest and your unselfish sympathy increases. You will find yourself entering into their lives.

One of the greatest men that Cambridge ever produced used sometimes to spend a whole night in prayer. One of our greatest English Bishops is said to have spent four hours a day in intercessory prayer. Your life will not allow this. But one thing you can do. You sometimes have a spare half-hour or hour. Try to spend it in prayer for one particular object. It may be for one person whom you desire to influence. And I tell you what will be the result. You will find that you are having poured out upon you the same spirit of love which was in St. Paul. You will be learning his secret.

You dare not say that you have no time. You have all the time that there is. And if once you are filled with the divine love for men, it will not be long before you are trying to bring them nearer to the Kingdom of God. If you are slow of speech, remember that actions speak louder than words. Men can easily see by your life whether you are Christ's or not. They can take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus. It is not what you say, it is not what you do, it is your life which preaches the best sermon.

You will never help a man, unless you are willing to impart to him not only the Gospel message, but your own life also.

But how, you say, can I gain this unselfish love? it does not come naturally. One of the greatest Englishmen of modern times has told us how it may be done, and no one could accuse him of having much spare time. General Gordon says in his diary that it made a great difference in his feeling towards the men with whom he had to do, if, before he met them, he had prayed for them. General Gordon was but imitating St. Paul—St Paul was in the habit of praying for men whom he had never met. And when he met them he simply could not help loving them, because he had prayed for them. Never bemoan yourself, and say how hard it is to speak charitably and think kindly of so and so; pray for him instead—and you will be unable to say anything unkind even if you wished. You have time to pray. Therefore you have time to love. Therefore you have time to obey St. Paul's command: "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ".

Believe me you will be repaid, more than repaid, for any effort you make.—Can you conceive of any greater reward than this—that, when life is over, men whom you have known here upon earth will rise up and call you blessed—will thank God that they have ever known you? And why? Because you have helped them by your prayers—by a word of encouragement—by your example: helped them one step nearer to the Kingdom of God. There can only be one greater reward and that too will be yours when Jesus Christ Himself will come to you and say: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these, ye have done it unto Me".

It will be no easy task. It will be hard to keep your attention. But it is worth making the effort. It is worth making any effort, doing anything, to spread the Kingdom of God. You may see but few results upon earth. But

think what a deathless reward will be yours, if when life is over, one and another rise up in the final judgment and call you blessed—if they thank God that they have ever known you, because you have brought them to Him. I know of no higher reward than this.

XIV.

THE INCREASING STRUGGLE.

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."—Romans vii. 19.

THE passage from which my text is taken is probably well known to us all. It is the description of an intense mental and spiritual struggle. St. Paul has asserted that God's law is holy and just and good, "but I," he passionately exclaims, "I am carnal, sold under sin . . . for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity . . . O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the" apostle "this? of himself, or of some other man?"

It certainly seems to be a description of himself, and yet is it not strange language for a man who has been converted for twenty years to make use of? Surely St. Paul cannot really mean to describe his own case: surely he cannot speak of himself as carnal, as sold under sin, as incapable of doing what he would, as craving deliverance from the body of this death? Is he not rather putting himself into the position of the men to whom he is

writing? Or may he not be thinking of struggles now past and gone before he knew the Christ?

I ask you to study the passage again, to study it carefully, to study it in its context, to study it without preconceived theories as to what a converted man must or must not feel. And as you study it, I am sure you will be driven to the conclusion that St. Paul is in very truth telling of an actual, present, personal struggle—a struggle which is taking place even as he writes the words—a struggle for life and death, which grows ever more and more intense, until it reaches its climax in that despairing cry for help: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But if so, how comes it that we are so unwilling to recognise the fact? How is it that we consider the description inapplicable to the Christian life? Certainly as far as our experience of such a life goes, the description is only too accurate. Again and again we have felt ourselves to be sold under sin, to be incapable of doing the things which we would. Again and again we have yearned for some one to deliver us from the body of this death.

But St. Paul's case, we feel, is different. He was a better man than we are, and therefore in his case the struggle was not so fierce, the failures not so conspicuous. This is the real reason why we do not like to apply this description to him.

But is it true that the better a man is, the less he has to struggle? that the closer he is to God, the less he is tempted by Satan? that the higher his ideal, the less manifest is his failure to reach it, the less intense his misery when he fails to do so? On the contrary, you know that the better you are, the more you are tempted:

the more you know of God, the more terribly conscious you are of sin: the higher your ideal, the more conspicuous is your failure to attain it.

The truth is that so far from St. Paul's words being unsuitable for a Christian man, they could only have come from one who knew more of God than most men, who had higher ideals than the best of us. Twenty years' walk with God had convinced St. Paul that in himself—in his flesh—dwelt no good thing. Twenty years' "practice of the presence of God" had taught him that he had no power of himself to help himself, that he was carnal, that he was sold under sin, that he needed some one immeasurably stronger than himself to deliver him from the dead weight of self—from the body of this death. Twenty years' work for God had shown him that the flesh still lusted against the Spirit, lusted with even greater power than it had done before he had known Christ.

St. Paul was a brave and an honest man, and because he was brave and honest, he dared to tell us what he thought and what he felt. We have reason to be thankful for his honesty; for as we study this account of his conflict, we gain no small help in fighting the battle of our own lives, we are taught what to expect and what not to expect. Two simple thoughts are suggested by the language of St. Paul.

The first is this. We must not expect the conflict in which we are engaged to grow less fierce the longer we live. The exact opposite is true. The more we strive to fight against the enemy, the more determined will the enemy be to make us his slaves. It is not a healthy sign to have no temptations: it is a sign of numbness, of deadness: the better we are the more we are tempted. Such a thought as this is comforting to some of us, who

feel that we are making no progress, because our temptations become more varied and more subtle every day that we live. We are wrong: we *are* making progress: the assaults of the Evil One are proof that he at least is conscious of our progress. He is compelled to bring greater forces against us than formerly. St. Paul had stronger and more hideous temptations twenty years after he became a Christian than he ever had before he became one. Lent tells us that the perfect Man was the most sorely tempted. "It is one thing to be tempted . . . another thing to fall."

The second thought is this. Not only is the struggle in which we are engaged one that is ever increasing in intensity: it is besides a *universal* struggle. St. Paul's language suits you and suits me, because the battle which we are fighting is common to every member of our race. In every man, however noble, the flesh is lusting against the spirit: in every man, however degraded, the spirit is lusting against the flesh. As you and I struggle, however feebly, however half-heartedly, to subdue the flesh and obey the spirit, we are fighting in the ranks of the greatest army, in the greatest struggle which the world has ever seen. The whole human race—not the tiny fragment which we see around us to-day—but the whole race, is engaged in the struggle. Nor is the struggle confined to our race. All creation understands and sympathises. "We know," says St. Paul, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"—"for the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God".

Aye, and not only the human race, not only the entire creation is involved in the struggle. God Himself has entered the lists. The Eternal Son of God has become

flesh, has taken our nature upon Him, has known what it is to be tempted. He came into this world: He fought: He conquered: He returned to His Father. But His struggles and His conquest are the permanent and indestructible heritage of the race with which He identified Himself.

For what He did whilst here on earth He is doing now. He conquered then, He is conquering now. He fought then, He is fighting now—fighting with us, for us, in us.

"The good that I would I do not": but what *I* cannot do myself, another can do for me. "The evil which I would not, that I do": but I need do it no longer, if *I* live no more, but Christ lives in me. Who shall—who can deliver me from the burden of self—the body of this death? "Thanks be to God Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

XV.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL.

"And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest."—St. Mark x. 21.

THE standard of human life which is laid down by Jesus Christ is the standard of perfection, absolute perfection. "Be ye perfect" is the only ideal of life which He recognises. "Be ye perfect" is the only possible ideal for his followers.

But it is just this—this extraordinarily high ideal—which makes Christianity so hard to accept. It is not the intellectual difficulties which stand in the way of most of us, it is the standard of life which is proposed.

Such a standard we feel is possible for some men, some few, rarely gifted geniuses. Some persons seem to be born to know and love God. They live and die in and for Him. But these are exceptions: the majority of those whom we meet are no saints. And as we associate not with these few exceptions, but with the average man, as we think of those whom we know best, whom we have learnt to like and perhaps to respect, whose society is to us interesting and attractive, we cannot help feeling that for many of them at least the ideal of perfection is unknown. Such persons are not definitely irreligious, they do not commit gross sins. But they never aim at

the standard of perfection. They are splendidly developed, it may be, in all other respects. One thing they lack. They do not know God. He is not, He never was in all their thoughts. They quietly ignore His existence.

And in their company we too forget God. The thought of Him seems to vanish. And at last we begin to wonder whether after all Jesus Christ did not pitch the standard too high, whether He really knew what was in man—in the average man—when He said, "Be ye perfect". Is not His ideal, grand in theory, impossible in practice?

It is perplexing to find so many who are able to live without any thought of God; to see so few who aim at the ideal of perfection. It is still more perplexing to find that the society of such men is often the most pleasant, more pleasant to us than that of others, who aim at a higher standard of thought and action. We ought, we sometimes feel, to like best those who are best: but as a matter of fact we do not. We do not always care most for those who are most truly religious.

And for my own part I do not think we are altogether wrong in doing so. I cannot but remember that just such an average man came to Jesus Christ, a man who never did much that was wrong, who could honestly say that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, but who—as Jesus said—lacked one thing—the willingness to surrender entirely himself and all he had, who was prepared to be everything short of being perfect. Of such a man it is written in the Bible: "Jesus looking upon him," not merely liked, but "loved him".

It is a comfort then to know that it cannot be wrong to care for the society of such people. It must be right, because Jesus Christ did so. He did not care for the

rich young man, because he was good; He loved him in spite of his failing.

It is not wrong to associate with such people; but the fact still remains, in such a man's company, the thought of God seems to vanish. Religion is gracefully but decidedly placed in the background. It is not a real power in his life, he is able to do without it, he is developed in body and in mind, he lacks—as we said—one thing, he does not know God.

Are such persons capable of knowing God? Are they capable of being perfect? Or is religion like a fine art? Have some men a genius for it, and others none? "Poets are born, not made," and it does seem at times that the same is true of religious men. "Saints are born not made." A few great men are born to know God. The rest must adopt a lower standard of life.

Jesus Christ did not think so. He always assumed that all men were capable of knowing God, capable of aiming at perfection. He never lowered His ideal to suit His company; He always tried to raise His company to His own ideal. When the rich young man came to Him, He clearly and decisively placed before him His one and only ideal of life: "If thou wilt be *perfect*, go and sell all that thou hast . . . and follow Me".

If Jesus Christ never lowered His standard to suit the requirements of the average man, we have no right to lower ours. The standard of perfection is the only one which we can recognise. And, thank God! though the standard is high, it is not entirely beyond our reach; though the ideal is difficult, it is not quite impossible. For there are few, if any of us, that have not known some who have placed this ideal before them, who have tried to live by such a standard. Not one of us, but knows

one or two human beings who are better, nobler, simpler than we ourselves are, who live not for this, but for the other world: men in whose presence it is hard to think ignoble thoughts, men who seem to come direct from the immediate presence of God. If Christianity is capable of producing even a very few of these men, it has attained a far greater success than if it made tens of thousands of moderately religious men. For such men tell us that what they are, we too may one day be: such men raise our whole conception of manhood: such men bring God down very near to us, within reach of us, they show us Him in Whose image they are made.

And perhaps Christianity has produced and is producing more such men than we know of. I think it must be so. I think that Tuesday next—the last great festival of the Christian year, the festival of All Saints—tells us that it is so.

"After this," says St. John in the passage which is read for the Epistle on that day, "After this I beheld, and lo," not a mere fragment of humanity, not a few great religious geniuses, but "a great multitude, which no man could number, of *all* nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

These men, with the white robes of purity, with the palms of victory, have conquered. They have fought the good fight. Many who have once lived and worked within these walls must be among that number. They are with us. They are near us. They are witnessing our struggles. They are men like ourselves—they are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. They are perfect. We too and all whom we know may be perfect. What man has done, man by the grace of God can do again.

XVI.

THE MEANING OF SORROW.

"He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."—Rev. xxi. 4.

EVEN when we were little children, this was one of our favourite texts. We had only just begun to learn the meaning of trouble, and we scarcely understood what our elders meant when they spoke of death. Yet the little that we knew of pain made us glad when we heard of a good time coming, when sorrow and mourning shall flee away and death be a thing of the past.

Years have gone by since we first heard these words. We have seen far more of the world. We have learned now that it has pleasures and possibilities of which we had not dreamed when we were children. As life goes on, we enter more deeply into its happiness. We delight in its manifold activities, in health and energy and liberty and hope, in the consciousness of growing powers. Deeper, if more mysterious, is the happiness which springs of human sympathy, affection and self-sacrifice.

> The help in strife,
> The thousand sweet, still joys of such
> As hand in hand face earthly life.

No one who had entered into these deeper joys, but must re-echo from his heart the noble words of our daily thanksgiving, "We bless thee for our *creation*".

But side by side with this thanksgiving is another and a sadder prayer commending to the Eternal Mercy "all those who are any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body or estate". Day by day these simple words remind us—and never more so than in a time of war—of the "infinite pathos of human life". They tell us that if the joy of the world is deeper than we dreamed of when we were children, so is its sorrow. The more we have seen of life, the more we have seen of human suffering. We see now why our elders looked so sad and spoke so low, when they spoke of death. It is for this reason that the familiar text of childhood comes with fresh force and fuller meaning the longer we live. We see more in the old words than we used to do. They are so beautiful, so comforting, so good—almost too good to be true.

Yes, it is a comforting thought that human sorrow cannot last for ever, that some day all tears shall be wiped away. It gives us a hope, a large hope, a hope not for you or for me alone, but for the whole human race.

And yet, it may seem strange to say so, but this hope, large as it is, is not large enough. It is not enough to know that there is a happy time coming for you, for me, for those whom we love, for the whole human family. We want more besides. If all tears were wiped away, if death and sorrow were past as a watch in the night, this would not be enough, we should not be content. And why? What more can we desire? We shall want to know what the pain meant. It might be past and gone, but what did it mean while it lasted, why was it sent to us? Yes, we do not merely want pain to go, but we want to know why it ever came. We long to understand the purpose, the meaning of trouble and of death.

The meaning of pain—the question is one of the oldest questions in the world and one of the hardest to answer. Years before you and I were born it was asked again and again, and different answers were given. There was one explanation which men liked to give, it was so simple, so natural, so obvious, and it seemed so true. It was this: they looked out upon life and they saw that sin and pain were closely connected. Often a man's misery was due to his sin. Pain seemed to be the result of sin in many cases; was it not so in all cases? Nay, was not pain another word for punishment? Pain must always be the punishment of sin.

In many cases, I need scarcely say, they were right. Only too often sorrow was the direct result of sin. But was it so in *all* cases? Occasionally a good man was suddenly afflicted with suffering or disease. Why? If pain was only sent as a punishment for past ill-doing, why was a good man the victim? There could only be one answer. The man was not really good. He might seem so in the eyes of men, but God could see into the heart: and he who seemed noble to men was vile in the eyes of God, and his suffering was the result of secret sins, which none but God could detect.

Such was the common explanation of pain. Pain was punishment—generally the punishment of open and glaring sins against God, but sometimes of cleverly concealed and secret sins, which only God could see. Such was the explanation, and yet the heart of man revolted against it. It was too cruel, too hard, too narrow. It might be part of the truth: it could not be the whole truth. There must be some other explanation as well. What was it?

The question was asked, but for the most part men scarcely dared to try to answer it. It was too difficult—

and yet there is one old book in Hebrew literature which deals with this problem, and attempts to tell us the meaning of pain. It is the book of Job. You know the story. Job was a good man. He was rich, he was happy. Men felt that his prosperity was the result of his uprightness. He was in favour with God and man. Suddenly—almost in a moment—he became a beggar, he was afflicted with a loathsome disease, his own wife turned against him, "he sat among the ashes" and cursed the day wherein he "was born, and the night which said, there is a man child conceived". Here was the problem in all its awfulness. What did it, what could it all mean? Had this man sinned or his parents?

The book goes on to tell us how three of his friends came "to bemoan him and to comfort him". For a whole week they had not the heart even to speak to him, but at last they could keep silence no longer and they began to help and comfort him. They told him that he must not despair, that all was ordered for some good purpose, and that his trouble was sent by the hand of God. He had sinned, he must have sinned, else he would not suffer as he did. But let him have courage, for "happy" said they "is the man whom God correcteth". Let him repent and turn to God, for He would forgive. But first he must give up that secret sin of his, which no eye but God's could see; he must confess that he had done wrong, and the Almighty would be merciful. You see they adopted the usual explanation of pain—that it was punishment for past sin. But what was Job's answer?

"I have heard," said Job, "many such things: miserable comforters are ye all." He indignantly denies what they say. He has indeed sinned, for all men have sinned.

But he is sure that he has not sinned more deeply than other men. Why should they be happy and he be tormented? What has he done to deserve such peculiar suffering? Has not he spent his life in the fear and love of God? Why then does God desert him in his utmost need? He has been cherishing no secret sin: he has tried to live a godly life. Of what use are all his efforts? What does it all mean? If his friends can tell him, let them speak: if not, they had best keep silence. His friends are shocked—Job seems so unreasonable. One after another they argue with him and attempt to convince him of sin. But all in vain. Job protests his innocence. When he has listened to all that they have to say, he cries out in despair: "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." The tremendous problem remains —Which is right, Job or his friends? All our sympathies go out towards Job, but then how can the arguments of his friends be met? The case has been argued out upon earth and has proved too difficult. The final decision rests with a higher than human tribunal. God Himself speaks: "the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind." He speaks and in no uncertain tones: "Go," He says "to the three friends—to my servant Job, and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept". God justifies Job; and in doing so, He shows us once and for all that Job's deepest thoughts were true, that his trouble was not merely punishment for sin, but something else besides. Do you ask what else? The writer of the book never tells us directly; nay, he scarcely seems to apprehend it himself; but, listen to the last words and you shall know: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now

mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes".

Strange, wonderful words from the lips of a man who a short time before was cursing the day of his birth. What a change! Then he bemoaned his existence: now he sees God's face. What has wrought the change? Sorrow. What has shown him God's face? Sorrow. What has made a grumbler into a saint? Sorrow. Sorrow has done it all. Sorrow has brought to the man his God. In prosperity he had heard of Him by the hearing of the ear. Even that was good. In the depths of trouble he has seen His face. That is infinitely better.

My brethren, what if this be the solution, not only of Job's life, but of all human life? What if this be the purpose, the object, the meaning not only of the sorrow of one individual man, but of the whole human family? What if it be no mere punishment for past sins alone, but a great discipline, an education, a working out of a divine purpose for the nation—for the world? What if the race as well as the individuals be perfected through suffering? What if the purpose of the education be the vision of God Himself? What if this be "that far off divine event towards which the whole creation moves". Think again of the words of the text with which we started, and you will see not only that it may, but that it must be so. That text does not merely promise that all tears shall be wiped away. It says more, far more, besides, —that a living actual Person shall with His own hands wipe them from all eyes. That Person is none other than the infinite God Himself: "God shall wipe away all tears". The day will come when sorrow shall be no more. Why? Because sorrow will have done its work, and have brought us face to face with God. The day will come when death

shall be a thing of the past. Why? Because death will have brought us one step nearer to the Centre of all.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

XVII.

GOD'S SUPREME CLAIM.

"But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."—St. Luke xii. 31.

THESE words follow in St. Luke's Gospel shortly after one of our Lord's parables. Like all His parables it is a picture drawn from life. It is so vivid and natural, that, as He tells the story, we can see the scene taking place. A rich man had prospered in his undertakings. The season had been favourable, and his land had yielded an abundant crop. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." So much had the harvest exceeded his expectations, that he found that he had no place in which to store his produce. "And he reasoned in himself, saying, What shall I do? because I have no room where to bestow my fruits." You can see the successful farmer walking over his land, congratulating himself on the harvest, looking at his barns, deciding that they are too small, and asking himself whether it is better simply to enlarge them or whether it is worth his while to pull them down and build new ones in their place. Finally he comes to the conclusion that he will build them entirely new. It might not be worth his while if he were an old man, but he is still young. He has many years in which to live, years in

which he is determined to enjoy himself. "And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." All this is wonderfully life-like and vivid, and we see the man lying down that night on his bed full of plans for the future—deciding where and how he will build his barns, and meditating on what he will do with his money. But human life is uncertain: his plans are rudely interrupted: he dies before the night is over.

Here the story ends. What became of his goods, whether the new barns were built, what men said or thought of him as they carried him to the grave—we do not know. Nor do we desire to know. For now that the man is dead, the interest of the story is transferred from this to the other world. We ask ourselves—not, How did such a life appear to the eyes of men? but, How did it appear to the eyes of God? Was He satisfied with it? This is the question that we really desire to have answered—and the more so, because we feel that the man who died was intensely human, strangely like one of ourselves. He was no prodigy of virtue or of vice. He was simply an ordinary man planning for himself an easy and comfortable future. The type to which he belongs is sufficiently common. We see it on all sides of us. We may not have been as successful as he in our business, we may seldom have had occasion to congratulate ourselves upon our prosperity; but we have this much in common with him. We are like him in disposition. Our character is the same. Our thoughts have again and again centred round ourselves and our

plans for the future; what we shall do; what changes we shall make; how we shall be able to enjoy life more completely. We, like the rich man, have often gone to rest at night simply thinking of ourselves and our own welfare. We have lain awake thinking of our own interests and enjoyment. Our life therefore is sufficiently like that of the rich man to make us anxious to know how God regarded such a life—how far He was satisfied with it; because it is possible that if He did not approve of the rich man's life, He would not approve of ours. Jesus Christ leaves us in no manner of doubt. He tells us that on the very night on which the man died God came to him, and told him plainly how He regarded him. "But God said unto him, Thou fool." That is the way in which such a life is looked at in the other world. It is well that we should face the fact. It is well that we should understand that if our chief attention is given to ourselves, to our own advance, to what we intend to do to make life pleasant and comfortable, the first words we shall hear from God as we enter the other world will be a condemnation of our whole life on earth. "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

In striking contrast to this picture of human life as it often is, our Lord presents another—human life as it ought to be. The rich man had thought of eating and drinking, of the enjoyment of his goods. Our Lord says: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. . . . Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink . . . but rather seek ye the kingdom of God." The contrast is indeed striking. For not only are we forbidden to make elaborate plans for our own future, to think of our own ease and enjoy-

ment, but we may not even seek the bare necessaries of life—food and clothing. "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God." So plainly does our Lord enforce this lesson that He tells us when we come to pray, we must not begin by asking for food. No. We must first pray: "Thy kingdom come" before we can say "Give us this day our daily bread". Clearly then the man who places his own interests before the cause of God's kingdom is no true follower of Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you one simple question: What are you doing to advance the kingdom of God? Call to mind your life during the last week. How much time have you spent in thinking over your own interests—your work—your enjoyment—your anxieties? How much have you spent in furthering the kingdom of God? How often have you prayed that His kingdom might come, that your neighbours, your family, you yourself might own God as the King of your lives? What have you done to help any individual a step nearer to God's kingdom? If you can give no answer to the question, if you are conscious that you have done nothing, that you have not helped others by word or by prayer, that you have simply lived for self alone; then, whatever your life may appear in your own eyes, or in the eyes of men, whatever excuses you may make; remember that there is no excuse for selfishness with God, that in His eyes you have not yet begun to live. If this is your condition, there is only one point of difference between you and the rich man in the parable. It is this. Your life is not yet done. His was done. He looked back upon his life on earth as a finished whole: you, thank God, do not do so yet. And because you do not, you have yet the opportunity in this world to cast away your selfishness and indifference,

and to begin to work for others. I plead with you who are still undecided, who are attempting that most impossible of tasks, to serve God and mammon, to renounce your selfishness. And you who have already known something of His kingdom and His righteousness, who have not received the Grace of God in vain, I plead with you also to remember that the time is short, that the night cometh when no man can work. Serve God with your whole powers.

Ah! but—you say—it is easy for you to talk thus. You, a stranger, do not know our lives, our difficulties and anxieties. You do not know how we are compelled to spend our time in thinking of things which we need, in arranging how to provide them. If you did, you would not give the impossible advice not to seek these things, but to seek the kingdom of God. I confess that I do not know or understand your lives, I do not know your difficulties and needs: but "your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things". He careth for you. He understands your life, and He never makes impossible demands. He has promised that if you think first of Him, you will not lack the things which you need. "Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." You need not fear that if you boldly and manfully follow God, if you strive to forget yourself and your own plans, you will suffer loss. God does not promise you wealth or luxury, but He does pledge Himself to give you all things needful. All things that you need shall be added unto you. Do you doubt whether His promise is true? Ask any one who has grown old in His service, who has lived for God and His righteousness: and the answer will be, "He is faithful that promised. He has done exceeding abundantly above all that I

asked or thought." Ask heads of families, who have throughout life placed first the spiritual interests of their children, whether God has fulfilled His promise. With tears in their eyes they will tell you of His wonderful goodness—how they that seek the Lord lack no manner of thing that is good. Ask the young soldier of the Cross, who has given up all for his King. He will tell you that he has been more than rewarded—that what God has promised, He is able also to perform. You need have no fear then that if you seek first His kingdom, other things will not be added. You may be certain that if you do not seek first His kingdom, but your own interests and pleasures, as you enter the eternal world you will realise that you have made the greatest mistake which a man can make. "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. . . . And Jesus said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you . . . seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink . . . your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

XVIII.

THE FAMILY LIFE OF GOD.

"The name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

WHAT is the highest kind of human life, the life most worth living? This is a question which has been often asked, for most men have at heart a genuine desire to live the highest life which they possibly can. But like many a big question, it is easier asked than answered. For on the one hand there is so much sin and misery in the world, that many a man feels if he is ever to be what he longs to be, what God intended him to be, he must get away once and for ever from the wickedness and wretchedness around him—he must live and work by himself alone. Thus again and again men have forced themselves away from all that they loved, from old scenes, from familiar faces, to live alone, quite alone with their God. But such men have found to their cost that they are not alone. For a man may leave home, and friends, and neighbours—he can get away from them, but he cannot get away from himself. He has fled from the sin and misery of the world, but he finds that he himself is full of the same misery and sin. What would he give to be freed from self—to be delivered from his own heart, from his own loathsome thoughts? He has left the world, yet from the world he is not free,

The thought then suggests itself to us that perhaps the man has made a mistake. The highest life may not after all consist in leaving the world; there may be a better way of becoming free from selfishness than living with self alone. May it not be better to live where God has placed us in the world, and yet not of it, to gradually lose all thought of self in working, thinking, existing for the sake of others? There is something grand and austere in the picture of a lonely hermit praying on the mountain-top, but there is something human, something divine in the simple life of an English home, when father and mother are learning to forget themselves in unselfish devotion to their children, their family, their God. Yes this family life must be, it *is* the highest kind of human life—the life most worth living, the life we could most wish to have lived when we come to die. But oh! it is a hard, hard life; and our attempts to live it are at best poor and half-hearted. We cannot live and love as we ought. Our homes are stained with selfishness and sin. Is there no home where sin has never entered? Is there no family life where selfishness is utterly unknown?

It is strange, very strange—but we cannot help feeling that somewhere—somewhere perhaps infinitely far away—yet somewhere there must be such a life—a perfect family, a true home. Men may tell us, they have told us, that such a feeling is absurd—that this pure family life, this life of unselfish devotion, never has been, never can be lived. And yet something deep within us says: "This life of love is possible. It can be lived, it must be lived, it *is* being lived."

Men may point in ridicule to selfish and imperfect homes around us, to relations hating and backbiting each other, to indulgent parents, to fretful disobedient children.

They may ask in scorn: "Where is your perfect home?" But the very men who ask the question, when they were younger than they are now, were themselves certain that such a life was possible, was the only life worth living. There was a time when they too knew something of the meaning of love. And they would give all they have to know and believe in its power once again. And no wonder. For then they were better men than they have ever been since. They were—they are sure—nearer to heaven than they are now.

Do you ask me then—Where is this home where sin has never entered? And what is the name of the family life where selfishness is utterly unknown?

I will tell you. The home is the home of God. The name is the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The life is the life of God—God is no mere solitary, selfish tyrant. God—the Bible says it twice and our own hearts have said it again and again—God is love—God simply *is* love. And His name, what is it but the great family name from which all families in heaven and earth are called—the name of a Father and of a Son?

An old Greek philosopher used to tell the people who lived in his days, that if they had only eyes to see right through the mists and confusions of this world into that other and better world beyond they would find that all that was purest and best and noblest on earth was but a faint, imperfect copy of something far better, far nobler, far purer in heaven. The old Greek philosopher was right.

If we who mourn over imperfections of earthly homes —the selfishness of fathers, the thoughtlessness of children—would only look right through these families on

earth into the life of God Himself, we should find there a genuine home—a perfect Father and a perfect Son. For long, long before any of us were born; long, long before any family on earth was made—God lived and loved in heaven. Yes, and all the families that we see around us to-day are but faint reflections of a better family life elsewhere. The fatherhood of man is but a copy of the Fatherhood of God—and affection here is but the suggestion of something infinitely better elsewhere. A father on earth reminds us of another in heaven—and love in this world, what is it but the shadow which is cast by the near presence of an unseen God?

> All fathers learn their craft from Thee;
> All loves are shadows cast
> By the beautiful, eternal hills
> Of Thine unbeginning past.

It does one good even to think of the life of God—to think of a Father Who really lives for and loves His Son, and of a Son Who fully returns a Father's affection. The little glimpses that we have into the Home Life of God are so wonderful—that I sometimes feel that I should do nothing else, but simply gaze, for ever gaze, into that Life which is Life indeed.

Yes, it is good to think of God. It is good to gaze into His life. But the more we think and the longer we gaze the surer do we become that this is not, cannot be, enough. For as we look we feel that we must do more. We must get right into that life—into the very heart of God. A hand seems to beckon us onward, a voice seems to bid us come closer. An irresistible attraction draws us nearer and nearer. We feel that we must go. And no wonder. For the hand which is beckoning is the hand of a Father—and the voice which we hear is calling us Home.

We simply must go, we cannot stay. There is no place like home and our only home is God.

Brethren, you and I have wandered away from home. We have left undone what we ought to have done, we have done what we know we ought never to have done. We have almost, if not quite, forgotten the real meaning of love. We have tried to make ourselves better, but we cannot. We have failed again and again. We never shall be able to make ourselves different. But one thing we can do. We can go home to the Father and ask Him to make and keep us better—ask Him to teach us the meaning of love.

"I will arise and go home to my Father, and will say unto Him: Father, I have sinned—Thou only knowest how deeply—but, Father, I have come home at last."

XIX.

INGRATITUDE.

"Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?—St. Luke xvii. 17, 18.

FEW things distress us more than ingratitude. If we have taken some trouble to do a kindness to a neighbour, we think that the least he can do is to thank us. And we find it hard not to be angry, if, instead of thanking us, he shows no sign of gratitude, but treats our favour as a matter of course. We are indignant not only with him, but with human nature in general. To think that any one can act so meanly as to grasp what he can get, and not take the trouble to thank the giver!

Our Gospel to-day presents us with a startling picture of human ingratitude. Jesus Christ is passing on His way to Jerusalem. As He draws near a village, He sees what you may still see near an Eastern village, a number of men suffering from the awful, because incurable, disease of leprosy. There they were apart from all others. They might not even enter the village street. They must remain outside—crying: "Unclean, unclean". As Jesus passed by, they caught sight of Him in the distance, and they shouted out—for they could not come close to Him —"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us". Jesus never refused any one in distress. He stopped. He had compassion

on the unhappy men. He did not heal them on the spot, but He gave them a simple command. He bade them go and have their leprosy examined by those whose duty it was to say whether a man were a leper or no. "Go," He said, "show yourselves unto the priests." They had faith enough to do as He told them. They went on their way, and as they went they were healed. They were healed! Think what that means. In a moment the disease which had seemed incurable was gone for ever. Life which had been black as night was suddenly lit up with untold possibilities. They were free men. They could go forth from their prison, and mix once more with their fellows. In one instant they were restored to health, comfort, society, home. "As they went, they were cleansed."

You would have thought that nothing could have kept them from returning to their Benefactor, and thanking Him from the bottom of their hearts for His marvellous kindness. You would have imagined that they would have been anxious to do anything for Him who had done so much for them. But what was actually the case? Nine-tenths of them went their way and were heard of no more. One, and one only, came back to express his gratitude: and he was an outcast, an alien, a half-heathen Samaritan. "There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." As we read the story, as we watch the men disappearing into the distance without a word or sign of gratitude, we are struck with amazement. Do nine out of ten men receive such a favour, and go away without thanking the giver? Is human ingratitude so common? Can such a large proportion of men be thus incredibly mean and selfish? Surely such ingratitude would not be found to-day, if Jesus Christ were with us again.

Long years ago in an Eastern palace a king sat listening to a story. It was a tale of cruel injustice and oppression. A rich man had taken a poor man's one ewe lamb, which he loved as though it were an only child. The rich man had seized it and put it to death. As the king heard the tale, he could scarcely believe that any one would do so mean and selfish an act. He grew more and more indignant; and at last he swore that the man who had done the deed was not worthy to live. "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." Suddenly the prophet who told the story stopped; and turned to David the king, and said: "Thou art the man. This picture of meanness and selfishness is a picture of what thou thyself hast done. Thou thyself art the man."

To-day in a Christian church as we hear the story of base ingratitude, we can scarcely believe that nine men out of ten would be so mean and thankless. No punishment, we feel, is adequate for such an offence. Men who could act in such a way deserve no mercy or compassion. But suddenly, even as we are loudly condemning others, a voice, not of a prophet speaking without, but of conscience speaking within, says to us: "Do not condemn any one else. The picture is a picture of thine own life. This is what thou hast done, what thou art doing. Thou art the man." "Thou art the man." Do you doubt it? Ask yourself this one question—How often have I returned to give thanks to God?

You know that like the lepers of old, you have sometimes cried: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me". You have not, it may be, prayed as often as you ought to have done. Yet from time to time in your utmost need you have turned as a last resource to God, and craved for help. When the need was passed, when you were safe again, how

often have you returned to give thanks? Or you have asked that God will have mercy on some one else—one of your family—a neighbour—a friend. When He has heard your prayer, how often have you turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God? If you have not done so; if you have asked for favours, and gone away without a word of thanks; then the picture of ingratitude in the Gospel to-day is a picture of your own life. "Thou art the man." Once more; if you have forgotten to thank for what you have asked and received, how often have you thanked for what you have received without asking? God gives you so many blessings, so silently, so regularly; that you do not even notice them until He begins to take them away. When you feel that they are going from you, you bitterly complain. But how often do you thank Him for them, whilst they last? These nine lepers accepted the greatest favour from the Lord as a matter of course, as though they had a claim to it. Do not we do the same? They treated Him in a mean, ungrateful manner. Do we treat Him any better?

Let me make two simple, practical suggestions to any of you who feel that you have not acted as you ought to have done, and are ashamed of what you have done. The first is this. Spend a short time—say ten minutes—this very day in simply thanking God. You can easily find subjects of thanksgiving. You can thank Him for what He has done and is doing for you yourself, for the common gift of life, for the capacity of enjoyment, for health, strength, the opportunity of work. Or thank Him for what He has taught you of Himself in the past, for the way in which He has guided you year after year. Think of some of the dangers through which He has brought you. "Think and thank." Thank Him for the oppor-

tunity He is even now giving you for serving, for knowing, for loving Him. Thank Him for the hope of fuller service, fuller knowledge, fuller love hereafter. Thank Him even for your difficulties and perplexities, because they are sent by Him to purify you and make you dependent upon Him. Count up His manifold blessings to you. And do not simply thank Him for what He does for you. Go on, and thank Him for what He is doing for your family, your neighbours—for His redemption of all mankind, for the means of grace He affords us here, for the hope He has given us for the whole world hereafter. "Think and thank." This is my first suggestion. Do not let this day pass without spending some time in showing your gratitude, in giving thanks to God. My second suggestion is this: never let any day pass without thanking God for something.

XX.

THE MEANING OF PROPHECY.

1 Kings xiii. 14-19.

THE story from which my text is taken is familiar to all of us. It is one of the most striking and tragic of all our Lessons from the Old Testament. I have chosen it because I believe the picture it presents will tell us more concerning the true nature and origin of inspiration and prophecy than any theories or fancies of my own on the subject.

In an infants' school, when the teacher wishes to impress the meaning of a lesson upon the young class, a picture is hung up, and the teacher points to each figure in turn, and asks who he or she is, what they are doing, and what the whole picture means. God teaches His little children in the big human family by a series of pictures. Do you wish to know the meaning of these difficult words which perplex you so much, inspiration, prophecy? Look at this picture, He says, of two prophets, and learn what inspiration is and what it is not. Correct your preconceived theories and fancies on the subject by this picture from real life.

The king of the country is worshipping at the altar of Bethel. He is worshipping the Lord Jehovah, but

under the similitude of a calf. Even as he is worshipping, he is disobeying His commands who said, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image". A prophet is sent to protest that obedience is better than sacrifice: "Behold there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel: and Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense". You remember how the prophet enforced his protest against this impure sensual worship of God by telling of a time when a king born of David's line should sacrifice the very priests who offered incense upon that altar, which was itself doomed to immediate destruction. "Jeroboam put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold upon him." But the hand became withered, and the altar was rent and the ashes poured out from it. Both signs were a protest against disorder and idolatry, a proof of the fact that there exists an invisible God Who alone has power to kill and to make alive, to overthrow and to establish.

At the prayer of the man of God, the king's hand is restored again. "And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward." The prophet had received contrary orders from God, and he refused to disobey orders. He resisted the temptation to make his inspiration and prophetical power a means of gaining refreshment at the palace, and a reward from the king.

He had resisted one temptation, but another and a fiercer one awaited him. "There dwelt an old prophet in Bethel," who had heard of "all the works that the man of God had done in Bethel," and of "the words which he had spoken unto the king". He wished to know this man of God. So He went and "found him sitting under an oak," exhausted, in all probability, by

his work that day. "He said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread." The man of God refused to disobey orders. The old prophet "said unto him, I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water". And the man of God went. The conclusion of the story is known to us—the meal interrupted by a denunciation of disobedience and its consequences—the violent death of the disobedient prophet—the pathetic request of the old man to be buried by the side of one whom he felt, in spite of everything, to be better and simpler than himself.

We have not time now to discuss the nature of the punishment the man of God received, or to determine which was the greater, that of the old prophet who had first to denounce the man he had deceived, then "to mourn, and to bury him," and then to give an account of his actions to the Judge of Mankind, or that of the man of God who was delivered by the short sharp pains of an unnatural death from the struggles and perplexities of this world into a world of absolute law and order, into the hands of that God of Truth whom he had attempted, however imperfectly, to reveal to a disobedient king and country.

But what does concern us is this: How is it possible for a man of God, a prophet, an inspired man, to be grossly deceived, to believe and to be the victim of a lie? And how can a man be a prophet, and receive messages from the Lord, and yet be a deceiver, a liar? For the old prophet lied unto him, and the man of God believed him.

I am sure we shall never understand the answer to these difficult, perplexing questions whilst we confine our view to this world alone. We must rise above the mists and confusions of this world to that other world into which the man of God was taken, to the clear white light of Heaven, to the throne of God Himself. Then only shall we understand how good, inspired men, not only in old times, but in our own days, may be the authors and victims of lies. What, I ask, was happening in heaven whilst these scenes were being enacted upon earth? And I should not dare to ask this question, but that it has been asked and answered before. God showed Micaiah the son of Imlah how not one but four hundred men could be at the same time prophets and yet deceivers, and inspired yet deceived. With him we too, if we have eyes to see, may behold "the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left". We too may hear the Lord as He "said, Who shall entice the man of God, who came from Judah, that he may go up and eat bread and drink water with the old prophet that is at Bethel? And one said on this manner; and another said on that manner. And there came forth the Spirit, and stood before the Lord and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of the old prophet that is in Bethel. And he said, Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also: go forth and do so."

These are strange words and I do not understand their meaning, but I do see that the writer of the Book of Kings took a broader, bigger view of inspiration and prophecy than most of us in this nineteenth century of the Christian era have yet attained to. He was certain

that the majority of false prophets were not mere impostors, but—what was ten times worse—they were men with genuine gifts of inspiration and prophecy. He knew that the fact of a man being inspired does not save him from being a liar and believing a liar; nay, he saw that the very Spirit of all Truth, who stood before the Throne of God, might become a lie in his mouth, that with the true He shows Himself true, but with the froward He can learn frowardness. God is Truth, absolute Truth, the source of all Truth. He is the Author and Giver of all good gifts. And yet it is possible for us so to misuse the best gifts He has given us, so to abuse His prophetical power, so to sin against and to pervert His Spirit who inspires us, as to utterly and hopelessly confuse the false and the true, to be liars when we think we are speaking the truth, to speak the truth when we think we are telling a lie, to put evil for good and good for evil, bitter for sweet, sweet for bitter, light for darkness, darkness for light.

This awful temptation to misuse the highest gifts with which God's Spirit has inspired us comes most keenly to the best, the truest men. No amount of cleverness on our part will prevent us from being at one time deceivers, at another deceived. No amount of prophetical power and inspiration will save us. It is equally possible for a man of God to be deceived, as for an old prophet to deceive. There is only one hope for all of us—implicit obedience, absolute reliance on our God and Master—Who is the source of all Truth.

This story proves, and there are many other stories in the Bible which prove the same fact, that the difference between men whom we see around us is not that one man is inspired and another is not, but that one man is obedient

to the Heavenly Vision, another is disobedient. God has given, is giving to all of us the Spirit of Prophecy, of Insight, of Interpretation. "Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophecies." You may be a man of God, you may be sent to protest against the sin of idolatry and disobedience, you may spend all your life in that protest, you may do good work for God: but the moment you disobey Him you will be punished, you will be the dupe of every liar; nay, if you continue to disobey Him you will end, unless God in His infinite mercy suddenly cuts your life short, by becoming a liar yourself. In your old age—alas! many have found it too true already—you will find yourself to be what the old prophet of Bethel was—a man who could see the heavenly vision, to whom the word of Jehovah came, who was inspired by God, and who yet was a deceiver, a liar. "Behold to obey is better than to prophecy, and to hearken than the gifts of inspiration."

XXI.

THE DAY OF THE LORD.

"Wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord?"—Amos v. 18.

It has been said that none but the poor who work for their bread can fully enter into the meaning of the request in our Lord's Prayer, which asks: "Give us this day our daily bread". Perhaps we may say that no one but a blind man, who longs to see the light of day, could readily and satisfactorily answer the question in my text: "Wherefore would ye have the *day* of the Lord?"

Many of us have tried to picture what life would be like if we were deprived of sight. We have felt how much of the beauty and simple joys of the world we should for ever lose. We should no longer be able to distinguish day from night; one colour from another. We should not know what the beautiful green leaves were like. We might hear the water, we could not see the brook. We might hear the bells, we could not see the church. We might hear the voices, but we could never, never see the faces of men—the faces which were made in the image of God. To a great extent we should always be dependent on others to lead us when we could not see the way. These trials, God knows, would be very, very hard to bear patiently. But there would be one other hardship worse, I think, than all besides. And

it would be this—not to be able to tell the difference between the true and the false. We might sit and talk with one whom we thought to be a friend, but we could not in any way tell what he looked like. We could not know whether his face was one which might attract us, or was so repugnant that, if we had sight, we could never think of calling him a friend—whether his looks were quite different to his words, whether he was really ridiculing, whilst seeming to be kind to us. This inability to distinguish between the true and the false, between the reality and the sham, between what is and what is not, this, I conceive, is the most terrible infliction of blindness.

A blind man, when told of a Day of the Lord, a day when God, Who is Light, Who is the "Father of Lights," will be fully and for ever seen, will feel that the words are no mere metaphor, no beautiful piece of poetry. "The Day of the Lord." They may not be the words which he would naturally use, but they do in some way or other express the very deepest longings of his heart. They tell him of a day when *all* shall see, a day in which *he* himself will at last be able to distinguish between what is and what is not, between the true and the false, the sham and the real.

It is not merely that he longs to see the common light of common day, the faces of his friends, the works of God. He does long—God only knows how much—for that. But by degrees he has probably learnt that this by itself would not, could not *permanently* satisfy him. He wants more. He wishes not only to get back his sight, but also to know *why* he was ever deprived of it, why for such a long, weary time he was unable to see, whilst others all round him could see, why he had so

much suffering to bear, when others had none. He yearns to see human life and all its perplexities, not only in the light of day, but in the fuller light of the Day of the Lord.

He is not alone in his desire. Many a man who has sight desires this same Day of the Lord. For to all of us there is so much that is difficult and dark in the problems of life: it is so hard to distinguish between good and bad, true and false, the works of light and the works of darkness, that men are glad to hear of a day when all will be made plain—a day when the merciful Lord will cast the bright beams of His light on all the perplexities of this unintelligible world. In some such way as this the chidren of Israel were gradually prepared to understand what a "Day of the Lord" means. It is no metaphor: the prophets felt that the ordinary light and the ordinary day of twenty-four hours were only real in so far as they told men of another Light, another Day —the Light of God, the Day of the Lord. Many a time when they saw the sunrise, there came into their mind the hope of another sunrise, when all the clouds would break, and God would be for ever seen.

Such in very simple language was the idea the prophets had of the day of the Lord. They were like blind men, longing for a day when they could see. They did not doubt that God is, but they longed to see Him as He is. The sun is what it is, although the blind man cannot see it: so God is what He is, although we cannot see Him. "I am," said God to Moses, in the first lesson for this morning's service, "I AM that I AM". It is we who cannot see what is.

Thus you see the reason why the prophet's desire to see the Day of the Lord is exactly the same reason that

leads the blind man to desire to see the light of day. Both wish to see what is.

This was the hope of a man like Amos. But such was *not* the idea which the Israelites of his time had formed of the Lord's Day. The same phrase to them had a completely different meaning. It is a dreadful truth that there are no texts, no phrases, no prayers, however good, however beautiful, which may not in time become mere cut and dry forms. The spirit and life go: the dead words alone remain. And this was the case with these words "the day of the Lord". The nation had become heartless and selfish, and delighted in lies. They did not want to see what is, but only what they liked. So they thought the Lord's Day was very different from what it was. They had forgotten Who the Lord is. They thought He was altogether such a one as they were—a weak, foolish father, who spoilt and petted his children. Amos warned them of their mistake. He told them that just as the clearer the light is, the darker is the shadow; so the nearer their God came, the blacker would appear their sin. "Woe," said he, "unto you that desire the day of the Lord! Wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord? it is darkness and not light."

Such was the message of Amos to the men of his day and generation, to religious men, who used religious phrases, who seemed orthodox, who attended church, who sincerely longed for the Day of the Lord, but whose hearts were unchanged. In the light of finished history, we look back and see that he was right, when he prophesied coming judgment. In about half a century they were carried captive to Assyria.

As we look back, we ask again and again: What of "the day of the Lord?" Has it come? Is it a thing of

the future? or were the prophets mistaken—has there never been, will there never be, such a day?

We are inclined to answer this question in different ways at different times. Sometimes we feel it cannot possibly have come. It is not only that St. Paul warns us in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians against being beguiled into the belief that the day of the Lord "is now present" (2 Thess. ii. 2.), there is so much also in the world around us, in our own lives, in the Church, which seems to tell of darkness, and to suggest that the Day has not come. But at other times we are certain it must have come. We remember the morning hymn we sing in church, which says that, through the tender mercy of our God, the day spring from on high *hath* visited us. Throughout the New Testament we read of a light already shining, until at last we read in the closing book the words of the Apostle in the Isle of Patmos: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day".

My brethren, I believe there is an element of truth in both our feelings. It is true that the Day of the Lord has dawned: it is also true that it is not as bright as it will be. In the words of Zacharias, it is only the "day *spring* from on high" that has come. The day of the Lord rose, when Jesus Christ—God of God, Light of Light—became a little child. It rose in the East.

Yes, the Lord's Day has really come: and the whole of the last book of the Bible, if you read it carefully, gives you a picture of that Day. St. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. Like many a day on earth, it rises in angry clouds: but every cloud has a silver lining, and the clouds are but a sign of a sun behind. "Behold," says St. John at the beginning of the book, "behold *He* cometh with clouds" (Rev. i. 7). Behind the clouds is seen "One

like unto a Son of man," whose "countenance" is "as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. i. 13, 16). As the sun rises the shadows become darker, man's sin is seen to be blacker. To the ungodly nation of Israel, who had deserted their God, the Lord's Day—as Amos foretold—was thick blackness. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great . . . and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee" (Rev. xviii. 2, 23). But when the city of man is fallen, the city, the Church of God is seen. As the day gets brighter, the city is seen more clearly, until at last we see right into the city, which "hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it" (Rev. xxi. 23): and, says St. John, "there shall be no night there". Why? because the day of the Lord has come, and the "lamp" of the city of God is the "Lamb" (Rev. xxi. 23).

I believe that the revelation of St. John is a revelation of *what is*, not of *what is not*—that the city of God *is* ever now here on earth. Much is dark, much is uncertain. I cannot always see the city clearly: sometimes I cannot see it at all. At times I doubt whether the day of the Lord can have come, whether Christ was ever manifested. But thank God! what I cannot *see*, I can yet *believe*. I believe the day has dawned. I believe that the Light of the world is the slain Lamb of God. We are told that the sun is nearest to us in winter, when it seems farthest away: so I comfort myself with the thought that God is often closest to us when we are coldest and He is most invisible.

Cling to the Cross: and put your trust in God, and you will yet see light. "Via Crucis," said the old Latin proverb, "via Lucis": the way of the Cross is the way of Light. There is much that we cannot explain, which we may never explain. The more we think, the harder

are the problems. But I look for light to the Lamb on the Cross, and there I learn that God *is*, that God is Love, that God is Light. Do you say: "Ah! but there are so few signs of the day; the clouds are so dark, men around us are groping and losing their way; worst of all we ourselves are not sure of the path"? It is only too true. For narrow is the gate, strait is the way, and few there be that find it. But John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress* has told us that even when we cannot clearly see the way, we yet may see the Light of the Cross in the distance. "Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicket gate? The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye".

The *lamp* of the city of God is the *Lamb*. Let us take John Bunyan's advice—he travelled this path before us: "Keep that light in your eye".

XXII.

THE MESSAGE OF AMOS.

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."—Amos iv. 12.

THE writings of the prophet Amos, which we are reading in chapel to-day, have a peculiar interest to the student of the Bible. They are the earliest extant Hebrew prophecy of any length upon the date of which scholars are agreed. But it is not to students alone that the writings are interesting. Amos himself was not a scholar. He was a shepherd and a fruit-dresser. He had not been educated among the sons of the prophets. He had been trained in the school of nature. Hence it is that his writings reflect more closely the life and thought of the nation to which he belonged, and have a deeper interest for the ordinary man than they would have done had they been composed by a divine in his study. I do not mean to say that because he was a shepherd, he was rude or uneducated. Even as read in a translation, his writings are clearly not the work of an uncultivated mind. But what I believe we may say is this, that he had never received any technical, theological or literary training. He had been educated neither as a prophet nor a priest. Two hundred years ago George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, wrote these words in his diary: "At another

time, as I was walking in a field on a First-day morning, the Lord opened unto me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ, and I wondered at it, because it was the common belief of people. But I saw it clearly, and was satisfied, and admired the goodness of the Lord, who had opened this thing unto me that morning." Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ a greater than George Fox had learnt the self-same lesson: "Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I am no prophet, neither am I one of the sons of the prophets; but I am an herdman and a dresser of sycomore trees: and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel".

If I ask you for a few moments this morning to consider the writings of this Hebrew shepherd, it is not because I can find in them a complete system of divinity or philosophy, but it is because they are the work of a plain man who loved his country, and had, or thought he had, a message from heaven to help her in time of need. The text that I have chosen embodies his main message. You probably know it well. The first few words have furnished the subject of many sermons. They are simple, and yet, like most simple words, their very simplicity makes them hard to understand.

When a man is warned that he must prepare to meet his God, something within him acknowledges the truth of the warning. He does not feel himself prepared to see his Maker. He is not ready for the next world. He does not care as yet to face death. But something within him also rebels against the warning. Why should he spend all this life preparing for another life? Is not life here and now given him to be enjoyed and enjoyed in-

tensely? Is it right to wish for death? The result of the conflict within him is that his efforts after a preparation for another life are spasmodic and unsatisfactory: he has enough religion to spoil some of his keenest pleasures, but not enough to make him simple and manly.

Perhaps the difficulty of such a man arises from his not understanding the words of the prophet. For when we examine them and study the context in which they occur, we find no mention of death or of a world to come. Amos was concerned with this present world. We may well doubt whether he had any doctrine of a future life. And even if he had, is it likely that he would have left his herds and his sycomore trees to warn people that they must prepare for death? They knew that too well already. Amos never says: Prepare to meet thy death. But he does say: Prepare to meet thy God. Death is not the same as God. Death is a thing of the future. God is a living, present Person. We have not to wait till death before we meet God: we dare not die till we have already met Him. "Prepare to meet thy God."

But this is not the whole text. The prophet adds the words "O Israel". The warning is not addressed to an individual, but to the entire nation. Amos never regarded his countrymen as mere units, but as parts of a corporate whole. He could not conceive of an individual's happiness which had no relation to the happiness of others. He could not contemplate an individual's degradation which was not reflected in the degradation of his country. His religion was essentially a religion of social life. "Prepare to meet thy God, O *Israel*".

An objection will probably be raised by some against such an interpretation of a familiar text, on the ground that it weakens the force of the prophet's words. If, it

will be urged, you want men to be religious, you must constantly remind them of the eternity in which they will soon be placed. Above all you must warn them as separate individuals, and not speak to them of any one else's soul but their own. But does not such an interpretation weaken the force of the prophet's words? Are they not stronger, when taken in their literal and simple meaning?

It is a serious thought that in a few short years this life will be over and eternity begun, when we shall be forced, whether we will or not, to meet our God. But is it not a more awful thought that eternity has already begun, that we are now in the presence of God Himself, that each difficulty, each crisis in our life, is a proof that He has not forgotten us, is a call to us to prepare to meet Him? It is this nearness of each one of us to God that makes every moment of life unspeakably sacred.

Again, is the warning any the less real because it is given to a society and not to an individual? A man has good cause to tremble when he is warned that the time will come when he will be judged for his present life. But has he not more cause to tremble when he learns that he is involving others in his doom? And yet it is a truth that each time you do an unmanly or a selfish act, you are sinning not only against your own life but against the whole society in which you are placed. You are laying up judgment, not for yourself alone, but for the corporate whole of which you are part. You are doing all in your power to render it hard for those amongst whom you are placed and those whom you call your friends to serve God in their day and generation. And if you yield yourself a constant slave to your natural impulses, the epitaph upon your grave will be those

words in which Joshua described the end of Achan: "And that man perished not alone".

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." The warning is as much needed to-day as it was two thousand years ago. To-day as then God is the foundation of all social life. To-day as then God is the author of all social morality. But to-day as then it is hard to believe in such a God. It is easy, or comparatively easy, in this chapel to say our Creed together, but it is hard—it is very hard—when we are face to face with the problems of our own and our nation's life to say with real meaning the words: "I believe in God". Yet he who sees God, however dimly, in human life, he who believes, however imperfectly, that society is held together by God alone, is indeed preparing to meet his God; "for"—in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews—"he that cometh to God must believe that He is".

XXIII.

AN ORDINATION SERMON.

"I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."—Rev. i. 12-16.

THERE are two elements, says Matthew Arnold, which go to make up human life. One is culture, the other is conduct. Man has need of both. But the second is the more important. It is, to use his own expression, three parts of life. If you would see the first in its perfection, you must go to Greece; if the second, to Palestine. His judgment is true. For we still gaze in wonder and envy at the remains of the architecture and sculpture of ancient Greece; but Hebrew art—there is no such thing. That side of life did not appeal to the Jewish mind. Painting and sculpture were almost unknown to the Jew. His nation was trained for sterner ideals. Most forms of art were forbidden by the law. "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth."

The vision which I have read to you is one illustration out of many. It defies the artist's pen. What painter can depict seven stars held in a right hand? What sculptor chisel a face with a sharp two-edged sword proceeding from the mouth? Attempts have indeed been made to reproduce it. One has been made by a painter on the very island where the seer saw the vision. But all in vain. Would you transfer the vision to canvas? The thing is impossible. It eludes you, and is gone.

To Englishmen this vision is at first sight hard to understand. They cannot picture it in their mind's eye as an artistic whole, and the symbolism is strange and bewildering, and most of it is never explained. But what is hard to an Englishman would be easy to a Hebrew. In a moment he would pierce through the visible symbol, seeking the spiritual reality below. And the symbols in the vision would carry with them their own interpretation. Put yourself in the place of a Jew. When you saw "a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot," the vision would recall your temple service, and you would not need to be told that He upon whom you looked was clad in a priestly robe. Again when you saw that His hairs were "white like wool, as white as snow," you would know that He could be none other than the "Ancient of Days". For had not the prophet said: "I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hairs of his head like pure wool"? Thus the component parts of the vision would explain themselves, recalling to memory some familiar usage or ancient prophecy.

St. John, who saw the vision, was a Jew. This is the reason why the symbolism is not interpreted. When he wrote down what he saw, he knew what it signified,

and felt no need to interpret. The vision spoke for itself. Any Jew would grasp its meaning. Two details alone would puzzle a Jew, and these—it is interesting to note—are the only ones explained. "The stars," "the candlesticks"—they were a mystery. Judaism could not interpret them. What did they mean? Why were they there? "Write," said the voice from heaven, "the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches."

"Candlesticks." Each Church is a candlestick set in a dark world. There are the candlesticks, but where is the light? Whence comes the flame? From candles placed within them? No. With a boldness characteristic of the Hebrew genius, all rules of art are set at defiance. We are lifted in a moment from earth to heaven, and we see burning in the candlesticks not candles, but—stars.

"Stars." This is the figure under which the ministers of the Church are represented. I know no more tremendous description of the Christian ministry in the whole of literature. Those who minister appear no longer as weak mortals, but as beings from another sphere. And it seems natural to be told that the "seven stars" are not seven men but "seven angels".

"Stars." Such is the ministry as described by the risen Lord Himself. Such is the office to which you, my brothers, are called. "Ye are the light of the world": and the light which you shed must be not of the earth, earthy, but "light from lighter worlds above". You must shine, like the stars, from on high. You must live, like the angels, in heaven.

"In heaven." I use no figure of speech, no conventional

phrase. You are called to live in the world, and yet not of it—to be in heaven, whilst still on earth. You must be so pure in heart that you will not simply know, but see God, see Him as the angels in heaven. Your light must shine with such transparent clearness before men that they shall forget you, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Look upon the vision—the empty, dark candlesticks below—the shining stars above; and it will not be long before you cry out in despair: "It is high, I cannot attain unto it. O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him Whom Thou wilt send. But as for me, my past sins rise up in judgment and condemn me. How can I who know little of God show Him to another? Give me some humbler task. I cannot dwell in heaven and give light to men. Woe is me! I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

But, thank God, the vision does not end here. The central figure is not ourselves, not even the Churches: "I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man". Nor do the candlesticks depend upon our uncertain starlight only. For the countenance of Him Who is in their midst is "as the sun shineth in his strength". It is a vision of strength and hope. Do you despair as you look out upon the Church in its loneliness and divisions.

> By schisms rent asunder,
> By heresies distressed.

Remember Him Who is in the midst of the candlesticks. Do you mourn over the imperfections of human ministers? Behind the earthly stars, the heavenly Minister, the great High Priest of humanity, "clothed with a garment down

to the foot," who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Do you doubt whether He sees us in our difficulties? "His eyes" are "as a flame of fire." Would you be assured of His sympathy for us in the fiery furnace of affliction? "His feet" are "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." The vision is a vision for all time. He was standing there before we were born, or ever the world was made. "His head and His hair" are "white" with age, "like wool, as white as snow." He will stand there when we have passed away. "I am the first and the last." Such is the vision which in all ages has been the support and comfort of Christendom.

But this is not enough. To know that Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, and that He is still standing and praying for the whole human race: this is good. But we ministers want more besides. We long to be brought into direct, individual relationship with Him. At a time like this, we are weighed down as never before with a sense of incapacity and sinfulness. It is He alone who can help and defend us. If He has called us to so high an ideal, does He give us no pledge to assure us of His sympathy—His presence—of our ultimate success? Thank God He does. "He had in his right hand seven stars."

"In his right hand." I know no greater comfort than this. It matters not what they say or think of us. It matters not how weak we may be. For "underneath are the everlasting arms". We are in a stronger than earthly grasp—"in his right hand". We can never fall out of His keeping. The ideal is high, but not impossible. For we can shed heaven's light on earth, if a Divine Being holds and supports us. "His countenance is as the sun," and in His light we shall see light.

I would fain leave no words of my own with you. I would point you away to the vision of the heavenly Priest, in Whose right hand are seven stars. Forget my interpretation, and look at the vision itself. From time to time, as you see the stars shining out by night, think that here is a parable of your life—a parable drawn not by men, but by the risen Lord Himself. And when human strength gives way, when you are placed in the midst of difficulties, perplexities, contradictions, fightings within and without, when life is dark and "your light is low," let the vision of His right hand sustain you. "He had in his right hand seven stars." Think of the meaning of those words in years to come. "Think and Thank." Thank God that He has called you with a heavenly calling, that He has counted you faithful, putting you into the ministry. "If I had a thousand lives," said an old saint on his deathbed, "I would give them all—all to the ministry." Go forth in hope. You live in a world where love is stronger than hatred—life is stronger than death—God is stronger than the devil. Believe me, there is no life in the world to compare with it. At the end of the long day when the Chief Shepherd shall appear to tell His sheep, picture our joy when one after another of those whom we have known and loved on earth rise up and call us blessed, when they thank God that they have ever known us, because we have led them one step nearer to the kingdom. Can any joy be greater than this? Only one, when the King Himself shall answer and say: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brothers, ye did it unto me. . . . Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "He had in his right hand seven stars." "They that turn many to righteousness" shall "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

XXIV.

ORDINATION ADDRESSES.

I.

"Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock."—Acts xx. 28.

ST. PAUL was on his way to Jerusalem. He had sailed to Samos, "and the next day," says St Luke, "we came to Miletus". The great city of Ephesus was not far distant, and St. Paul must have longed to pay it another visit. But he had not time. "Paul had determined," says the historian, "to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted . . . to be at Jerusalem." Yet he might never be that way again, and he could not pass by in silence those amongst whom he had lived and worked night and day for the space of three years. If he could not see the whole Church, he would see its ministers. "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church." When the elders came they knelt down for a last prayer together. But before they prayed, St. Paul recalled to their mind his own work amongst them, and (as he never thought to see them again) he gave them parting words of counsel. The first counsel was this: "Take heed to yourselves".

"Man is immortal till his work is done;" and St. Paul's work was not yet done. He lived to return to Ephesus once more. After he had gone from the city, he wrote a letter to the minister whom he had left in

charge. His counsel still has the same ring as before. "Take heed," he says to Timothy, "to thyself, and to thy teaching."

In both cases the man's own life is placed first—before the flock, before the teaching. If St. Paul were in our midst to-day, would not his counsel be the same? Would not his first words of advice and warning concern not your people, your services, your visiting, your preaching—but yourself? "Take heed to yourselves;" "take heed to thyself".

Let me then speak to you about yourself—your own life. You do not know how much depends upon it.

First of all I take it for granted that you are anxious to influence your fellow-man. Otherwise you would not be here. You have come here because you want to do as much good as you can in the world. You desire to win men over to your Master, Christ. Now, ask yourself this question: What type of man has influenced you most? Is it the man who has consciously laid himself out to influence you? No. It is some one whose life involuntarily draws you to himself. You feel that there is a power in that man's life which you would like to have in your own. He comes as an inspiration into your commonplace life, urging you on to something higher. He lives in a purer, stronger atmosphere, and when you are with him you breathe the same air as he does. This fact suggests a serious reflection. You cannot influence men by laying yourself out to do so. It is your life which must inspire them. In your presence they must breathe a better, clearer air. Believe me, there is no short cut to influence. You must first be what you wish others to be. You think that they are listening to what you say. You are mistaken. They are observing what you

are. "What you are," says Emerson, "thunders so loud, that I cannot hear what you say."

Are you prepared for such a responsibility? Are you willing so to live that your conduct will be more eloquent than your words—so to live that you will come as an inspiration into the lives around you? If not, you have mistaken your vocation.

But even this is not enough. You are called to undertake a still more serious responsibility. You have not simply to come to men as an inspiration, but—if I may use the expression—as a revelation. Religion, as you know, is treated to-day with greater respect than it was twenty years ago. Men generally are agreed that pure and simple materialism is no final solution of life's problems. They allow that much may be said in support of the existence of some kind of Divine Being, of some kind of spiritual world. Nor can they withhold their admiration from the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel. But further than this the average man hesitates to go. The resurrection may or may not be true. He is too busy or too indolent to enter into the question at length. He hardly sees the importance of it. He is half-inclined to believe. But there is nothing definite to turn the scale in favour of belief. What is to turn the scale? I answer: You must — you yourself must be the proof that the resurrection has taken place, that Christ is alive. A man will recognise the folly of thinking of Christ as dead in the tomb, if he see Him alive in you. He will grasp the importance of the resurrection as soon as he is brought face to face with a power in you which he cannot account for—the power of the risen Christ. The average man does not know what Christianity is: you must reveal it to him. You must show him what manner of

thing it is, what it can do for a human being. You must give him an opportunity of seeing Christ—not as a distant figure in history, not as an ideal character in a book, not as a founder of a great institution; but as a human, a divine Person, living, moving, working in you. Live Christ before his eyes. Let him take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus. Let him realise that Jesus is no mere philanthropist who died nineteen centuries ago, but that you know Him, that you have seen Him, that you have conversed with Him, that you yourself are a witness of His resurrection. Perhaps he has settled down to the belief that men cannot rise above a given height, and that it is unwise to expect much from poor weak human nature. If so, shake him out of that belief. Live in what St. Paul calls "the heavenly places". Demonstrate to him that men can rise higher than he dreams of. Reveal to him the spiritual life, and he will cease to doubt its existence. If he has formed low ideas of human nature, revolutionise them. Show him what Christ can do with it, how he can transform and transfigure it. Let him see how a man can be changed who yields himself body and soul to Christ's power; what possibilities there are in this weak human nature when Christ comes into it and so possesses it that a man can say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me".

Are you prepared for this? Are you ready so to live that you will come to men as a revelation of something which they have never seen before? If not, you have mistaken your vocation.

"Take heed to yourselves." Do not saunter into the life of the ministry with half-open eyes. Count the cost of the work upon which you are entering. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and

counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." You have seen men fail in the work which you are about to undertake, men who somehow or other have missed their vocation and have become a burden to themselves and their people. The time was when they were young men, fresh from college, inspired with high ideals, full of hope like yourself. Then they as little dreamed of failure as you do to-day. Why did they fail? Because the cost of the work proved more than they had calculated. They began to build, but they were not able to finish. "Be not high-minded, but fear." What has happened to them may happen to you. If you would avoid the same result, sit down while you have yet time, and count the cost. What is the cost? I answer, Your life, yourself—all that you have, all that you are. You must spend all or nothing. The Master demands every fraction of your life, and demands it every hour. Each of your faculties must be placed at His absolute disposal. You are no longer your own. You belong to Him—body, mind, and soul. These are the conditions, the indispensable conditions of His service. Sit down and count the cost and ask yourself, Can I undertake it?

Undertake it? No; not by yourself. You are too weak. You will fail before the day is out. But what you cannot do yourself Another can do for you. His iron will can work through your feeble will, and strengthen it with a strength which is not your own. "Without Me," says the Master, "ye can do nothing." "I can do all things," says the disciple, "through Christ which strengtheneth me."

XXV.

ORDINATION ADDRESSES.

II.

"Take heed to yourselves."—Acts xx. 28.

We have seen how everything in our ministry will depend upon our own lives; how God places us in the ministry that we may come as an inspiration to other men, as a revelation of a higher type of life; how there is only one power which can transform and transfigure our lives—the power of Christ. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." How are we to gain that power? The answer is simple: By prayer. If then you would take heed to yourselves, begin at the beginning: Take heed to your prayers.

We deceive ourselves in this matter of prayer. We think that we devote more time to it than we actually do. Let me take an example. You have been trying to help a friend. You would do anything to lead him to the Kingdom of God. You have, it may be, attempted to say a few blundering words. But you fear that he may have resented them, that you may have done more harm than good. Then you say: "I will pray for him. At any rate my prayers can do him no harm, and must do him good." You determine to pray for some time—say half

an hour—simply and solely for him. You go home and begin. Now it is not easy to pray for any one object even for half an hour. And, unless you note the time, you will think that you have been engaged in prayer for half an hour when less than half that time has elapsed. You have no idea how easy it is to deceive yourself in this matter. Time goes so slowly when you are praying. What then ought you to do? In such a matter as this I do not think that any one can lay down rules for another. All that a man can do is to tell others what he has found useful in his own experience. If there is any one whom I am specially anxious to help, if I feel that I would do anything to bring him nearer to God, I say to myself: "If I would do anything for that man, I can spare half an hour or an hour to pray for him". Then, that I may not deceive myself, I carefully note the time; and during the time which I have set apart for that purpose, I do nothing else. I cannot entirely control my thoughts; I cannot always concentrate my attention. But each time I find my thoughts wandering, I bring them back to the matter in hand. I am not greatly distressed at my wandering thoughts. I do not give up in despair, even if they have wandered far away. I tell God that I shall never do better unless He helps me. When the time has come to an end, I feel that at any rate I have done nothing else during that time but struggle hard to pray for the one object. I learned this simple rule from the teaching of a poor lay brother, who, though he began life as a soldier and a footman, and had no education, yet lived for more than thirty years in the immediate presence of God, to Whose will he was so resigned "that I would not," he says, "take up a straw from the ground against His order,

or from any other motive but purely that of love to Him". Listen to his counsel given two centuries ago: "I do not advise you to use multiplicity of words in prayer; many words and long discourses being often the occasions of wandering: hold yourself in prayer before God, like a dumb or paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate: let it be *your* business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord: if it sometimes wander, and withdraw itself from Him, do not much disquiet yourself for that; trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind, than to recollect it; the will must bring it back in tranquillity; if you persevere in this manner, God will have pity on you".[1] I pass on these words to you. They have helped me. Possibly they may help you also. But at any rate, I implore you to avoid self-deception in this matter of prayer. Deal honestly with yourself. It is a matter of life and death. Do not convince yourself that you are devoting more time and pains to prayer than you actually are. The consequences of such self-deception may be fatal. Always remember that if you are to be a successful minister you must spend much time in prayer. The man of prayer is the man of power.

But, you say, how am I to learn to pray? My advice is: Go straight to the Bible. Let it be your first lesson-book. And there are two parts of the Bible to which I would especially direct your attention. The first is the Psalms.

The best book of devotions which I know is the Psalms; and the reason why it is the best is because it is the most human. The main characteristic of the Psalms is their naturalness. The men who wrote them told God sim-

[1] *The Practice of the Presence of God*, published by Masters, price 3d.

ply and frankly their whole life—their past history, their hopes for the future, their doubts, their fears, their perplexities, their contradictions, their guilt, their innocence, their sorrow, their joy. If at times they were driven to despair, they did not cease praying: they did not tell their doubts to friends, and ask for sympathy. They went direct to God and complained. "When my heart is vexed," says the Psalmist, "I will complain." And they did indeed complain: "My God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season also I take no rest." "Up Lord, why sleepest Thou? Awake, and be not absent from us for ever."

Now, many of us cease to be natural when we begin to pray. We almost look upon the Divine Being as a kind of clergyman, to whom we can only—if I may use the expression—"talk religion". Yet all the while He is our Father, and He made every part of our being (not only the religious part), and He is longing for us to confide in Him, and to tell Him plainly the story of our lives. Many of us regard Jesus Christ as a kind of Confessor, to whom we turn when in trouble. Yet all the while He is our Brother, Who hast lived our life, Who knows what it all means, Who is waiting for us to make Him a Friend, to tell Him all that we think and feel, all that we like and dislike—our encouragements, disappointments, expectations, ambitions—everything. The way to know Christ is to be natural. Begin to speak to Him as you would to an earthly friend who is interested, not only in your spiritual life, but in every part of you. Each detail interests Him, and He will help you in each detail, if you will lay it before Him and ask His assistance. Study the Psalms, and learn from them to be natural; and

remember that naturalness is the exact opposite of irreverence and sentimentality.

The other portion of the Bible to which I would direct your attention is the Gospels. Study the Lord's Prayer. "After *this* manner pray ye," "and therefore," as it has been well said, "any manner but this is a wrong manner". Have you ever examined the manner of this prayer? Have you studied, not simply its details, but its general method? You perceive at once that it falls into two portions—the first relating to God, the second to man. Note the order. We are bidden to say, "Hallowed be *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom come, *Thy* will be done," before we make any allusion to ourselves and our needs. Now if, when you shut the door and pray to your Father in secret, you give the first place to yourself and your own needs, you are not following the manner of the Lord's Prayer. You are devising a manner of your own: you are saying the second half of the Lord's Prayer before the first. If the Lord had intended you to say it first, He would have placed it first. Again, in the last part of the prayer you must often have observed that we are taught to say, not "Give *me*, forgive *me*, deliver *me*," but "Give *us*, forgive *us*, deliver *us*". Now if, when you pray to your Father in secret, you are more concerned about yourself than your neighbour, you are not following the manner of this prayer. Once again you are inventing a manner of your own. You are substituting the word "me" for "us". If the Lord had wished you to say "me" He would have placed it in His Prayer. But, as it is, it never once occurs in this the model Prayer. If then you ask me what is the keynote of the Lord's Prayer, I answer, its unselfishness.

You also must learn to pray unselfishly. It is right

and, as I have already said, natural to pray for yourself. But do not stop there. Go and pray for others. There is no such thing as a private blessing. You belong to a family whose Father has no favourites. He can only bless you if you are willing to share the blessing with your brothers. Enter into the spirit of the Lord's Prayer, and day by day let your private prayers become more like it. Our Church's Morning and Evening Prayers will be no small help to you. They will interpret to you the Lord's Prayer. As you say them morning and evening, as you read month by month the Psalms, they will make you place first God's name, God's kingdom, God's will. They will teach you to rise out of yourself and to pray for your Church, your King, your Parliament, your country. More modern books of devotion some of you may find a help, others may find a hindrance. One word to those who use them : choose the books which are least introspective, and which remind you most of the Lord's Prayer.

Never make the excuse : "I am too busy to pray". Luther wrote of himself in the busiest part of his life : "I have so much to do that I cannot get on without three hours a day of praying".

Once again, I would say : "Take heed to your prayers". The man of prayer is the man of power. Spend as much time as you can over prayer, and learn to make your prayers more natural and less selfish.

XXVI.

ORDINATION ADDRESSES.

III.

"Take heed to all the flock."—Acts xx. 28.

In a remarkable work called *Reflections of a Russian Statesman,* which has lately been translated into English, one of the most influential of living statesmen has told us in unusually plain language his impressions of the church in which you are seeking orders. "In an English church," says Pobeydonostseff, "more than anywhere else, the thought occurs to the Russian, There are many good things here, but I am thankful that I was born in Russia." When we ask the cause of his thankfulness, the answer is: "In Russian churches all social distinctions are laid aside, we surrender our positions in the world and mingle completely in the congregation before the face of God. Our churches for the most part have been built with the money of the people. The poorest beggar feels, with the greatest noble, that the church, at least, is his. The church is the only place (how happy are we to have one such place!) where the poorest man in rags will not be asked, 'Why art thou here,' and 'Who art thou?' It is the only place where the rich man may not say to the poor, 'Your place is not beside me, but behind'.

"Enter an English church and watch the congregation. It is devout; solemn it may be, but it is a congregation of 'ladies and gentlemen,' each with a place specially reserved; the rich in separate and embellished pews, like the boxes of an opera house. We cannot help thinking that this church is merely a reunion of people in society, and that there is place in it only for what society calls 'the respectable'."

The statesman admits that of late years things may have greatly improved. We Englishmen feel that his description is misleading, one-sided, grotesque; that if he had seen some crowed mission church in a slum, he could never have spoken as he does. Yet for all that, it is well that we should see ourselves as others see us. And can any of you say that the picture he draws is entirely imaginary? No, the Russian is laying his finger on a real defect—our incapacity in many places to influence more than a select few. You know of parishes where the services are bright and cheerful, and there is a select circle of excellent people who look upon the Church as a kind of religious club, who are deeply attached to its services and ministers. Yet all around them the parish as a whole is slumbering peacefully in heathenism. It knows nothing and cares less about what is going on inside that building. In that parish at least the Church has ceased to be the Church of the people, and has become the Church of "the respectable".

My brother, it is a tremendous responsibility which you are taking upon yourself. A definite portion of English territory has been assigned to you. You will have to answer before God for every human being in that district —for the respectable and the disreputable, for the interesting and the uninteresting. "Take heed," says St.

Paul, not to part, but "to *all* the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath set you to have oversight." How are you going to discharge the responsibility? Are you relying upon improved organisation, men's clubs, popular services, attractive preaching? These things are good in their way: I do not undervalue them. But they must not usurp the place of that simplest duty which every pastor, because he is a pastor, owes every member of his flock—the pastoral visit.

"Take heed to your visiting." Nothing will make up for the neglect of this duty. If, as I firmly believe, the English Church is becoming more and more the Church of the people, and less and less of the respectable class only, it is because her clergy are realising that they cannot rely upon social prestige, dignity, superior education, but only upon personal influence. They feel that it is essential to get into touch with their parishioners. Do you wish the Church of England to be the Church of her people, the Church of their homes? Go and visit them in their homes.

The Chief Shepherd of the flock has laid down once for all the relations which exist between Shepherd and sheep. "I," says Christ, "am the good shepherd"—*ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός*, that is, the ideal Shepherd, whom every other shepherd must copy—"and I know my own" (*γινώσκω τὰ ἐμά*), "and my own know me" (*γινώσκουσί με τὰ ἐμά*). Every shepherd of Christ's flock must follow the ideal which the Chief Shepherd has placed before him. He must know his own, and his own must know him. You visit your flock then, in order (1) that you may know your own, (2) that your own may know you.

1. *That you may know your own.*—You must, as far as in you lies, know every man, woman and child dwelling

in that portion of England "in the which the Holy Ghost hath set you to have oversight". They all belong to you. I am aware that some of you are in the midst of hard work in crowded parishes, where strive as you will you can only know a small portion of the flock, where you can never hope to call all your own sheep by name. To you I would say, Go forward in hope! Do what you can, and do not be disheartened at what is left undone. If you have done your best, it is not your fault. God does not make impossible demands. Only one word of counsel: all your people belong to you—the men as well as the women. If you find that the men are not at home when you call in the afternoon, you must not be content with seeing their wives; you must go and find them in the evening—cost what it may. The man must have no excuse for feeling that religion only concerns his wife. Deal gently with any who worship the God of their fathers in a manner other than your own. They too belong to the one Body; for they too—I speak of most of them—have been baptised as truly as you have been in the Name which is above all other names. And if with mistaken zeal you should "overdrive them one day," they will die, and the Chief Shepherd will require their blood at your hands. "And other sheep" you have "which are not of this fold" —poor human beings who have erred and strayed from their most merciful Father—"them also you must bring". Go then and know your own. Go and find out their language, discover their ways of thinking; go and enter into their joys and sorrows. Go not as a teacher, but as a learner. They have, I believe, often more to teach you than you have to teach them: listen and learn. Do not supercilliously take for granted that you know all about them, and that you can make sermons which they will

understand. You cannot. They must first tell you their symptoms, if you would prescribe not for imaginary diseases, but for the actual ills from which they are suffering. The more you understand them, the slower will you be to prescribe any universal remedy. The better I know a man, the more I realise that he is unlike any other man whom I have ever met or will ever meet again. God never makes duplicates. No two leaves of a tree, they tell us, are exactly alike. Certainly no two human beings are. When I fail to appeal to a man, I used to blame him: now I blame myself for not knowing him better. You will never be a true pastor until you can call your own sheep by name, until—with the "Pastor pastorum" —you have learned to say "I know my own".

2. But it is not enough for you to know your own. It is as important that *your own should know you.* I have heard the remark made, "He is a splendid preacher. I like to hear him in the pulpit, but I would rather not know him in his own home. The private life of a clergyman is almost always disappointing." My brother, it is your duty to take away this reproach, to go amongst your people and to remove their prejudices. Let them feel that you are the same on Monday as on Sunday, that you never say in the pulpit anything which you are not doing your best to act out in ordinary life. If your people for one moment see that the thing is possible, and that you are in some slight measure what you preach, your life will be a sermon which they will never forget. The drawback to the other course—preaching on Sunday the highest ideals, and then keeping in dignified seclusion during the week—is just this: the people do not know you, and they cannot understand how your ideals can be worked out in an English home. They listen with awe

on Sundays, but from Monday to Saturday you and your ideals are nothing to them. Let them see a man in their midst, a friend in their home, who is true to his Master wherever he goes, and they will believe in anything that you say. You are no shepherd until you have ceased to adopt the lordly method, until, to use St. Peter's words, you have given up "lording it over the portions allotted to you," and have attempted the humbler, the pastoral method, and become "ensamples to the flock". You have not learned the meaning of your office, until with St. Paul you can say "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ".

XXVII.

ORDINATION ADDRESSES.

IV.

"Take heed to the teaching."—1 Tim. iv. 16.

As a child I have heard the remark made, "'So and So' has sat under the sound of the Gospel for years, and yet it has produced no softening effect upon his life. His is a hopeless case, because he has gradually but unmistakably become Gospel hardened." I have sometimes asked myself since, How far was such a man to blame? Had he ever during those years heard not merely the sound of the Gospel, but the Gospel in a language which he could understand, in his "own tongue, wherein" he was "born"? Was the preacher entirely free from blame, the preacher who had never succeeded in adapting the message to his hearer?

"Infinite sympathy," it has been said, "is needed for the infinite pathos of human life." Unless you can sympathise, you will never be a preacher. Every word that you say may be excellent, the doctrine may be sound, the arguments convincing; but you will not convert men by logic. "From the heart of man," says Christ, "come forth evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries." If the heart is the seat of the mischief, it is to the

heart and not the head that you must make your first appeal. You must speak from the heart to the heart. In a word, you must love. "To address men well," said a great French abbé, "they must be loved much." An orator of high intellectual powers, he continues, occupies a pulpit, and leaves scarcely any results behind him. He is succeeded by one of ordinary attainments, who draws wondering crowds and converts many. The local sceptics are amazed. "This man's logic and style," say they, "are weak; how comes it that he is so attractive?" It comes from this, that he has a heart; that he loves and is loved in return. So when a venerable superior of mission preachers wished to learn what success a priest had met with on his tour, he generally asked: "Did you really love your congregations?" If the answer was in the affirmative, the pious man remarked: "Then your mission has been a good one. . . ." Just look at the young priest on his entrance upon the sacred ministry. He is armed from head to foot with arguments, he speaks only by syllogisms. His discourse bristles with *now*, *therefore*, *consequently*. He is dogmatic, peremptory. One might fancy him a nephew of one of those old bearded doctors of the middle ages. He is disposed to transfix by his words every opponent, and to give quarter to none. He thrusts, cuts, overturns relentlessly. My friend, lay aside a part of your heavy artillery. Take your young man's, your young priest's heart, and place it in the van before your audience, and after that you may resort to your batteries if they are needed. Make yourself beloved—be a father.

This then is the supreme law of preaching: "Love your audience"; love them passionately. Do not be content with bringing them a message, announcing to them a

Gospel. They crave more than this; they demand something more human. Listen to the Apostle's description of preaching: "In our yearning for you, we thought good to impart unto you not only the Gospel of God, but our own souls also, because ye became very dear to us". If you are ready to impart your soul, then and then only will you win your hearer's soul. The measure of your success depends upon your affection. "Though I speak with the eloquence of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." Thank God that it is so! Few of us can be learned, few of us can be eloquent, few of us have any pretension to genius: all of us can love.

Do you ask, "How am I to learn to do so? My heart is cold, and, to tell the truth, I feel no passionate affection, such as the Apostle describes." I answer, "Take heed to your visiting, take heed to your prayers". *Take heed to your visiting.* That is your means of learning to know your people. It is a striking privilege we clergy enjoy—this right to enter any man's house in the portion of England allotted to us. Cherish it as a sacred privilege; know your own. How can you love those whom you refuse to know?

But above all, *take heed to your prayers.* This is the root of the matter. If the measure of your success depends upon your affection, the measure of your affection depends upon your prayers. You can learn to love your brother, if you will only pray for him: and the longer you pray, the more you will love. I defy you to dislike any man for whom you have prayed earnestly for any length of time.

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." General Gordon used to say that in his

dealings with an Arab chief, he found that it made a great difference to him whether or not he had prayed for the man before he met him. "Do you remember Gordon's visit to this place?" I asked a colonist in a remote village in the north of Cape Colony. "Yes," he said, "I remember Gordon. You see that hotel yonder; that's where he stayed. And the first thing that queer man did when he came to settle the native dispute was to go to that hotel, engage a room, open the window, and spend two hours in meditation and prayer." It is in your power to be a man of prayer. Are you going to become one? If you are, you ensure success. If you are not, you court failure from the outset.

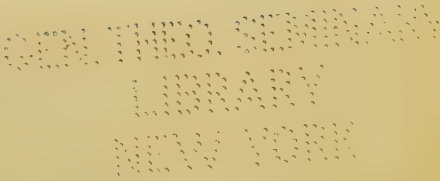
All other rules of preaching are those which love dictates. Let us mention two. (1) *Give of your best.* If you love your people, grudge them neither time nor labour. I despair when I hear a young man say, "I find preaching easier than I had expected: I can put a sermon together in two or three hours". For I know what that young man's sermons are like, and, more than that, I know what they will be like twenty years hence. They will be what they are now—changed, perhaps, a little for the worse. I have great hope for one whom I hear lamenting as to the difficulty of preaching, as to the days which he takes to work out his meaning clearly, as to the poor result of his efforts. For I know that although his addresses may be immature and involved now, the day will come when he will be able to express himself, and have a message worth listening to. From the outset then I implore you, by your love for your people, give them of your best—your very best.

(2) The more real your love, the greater will be your self-restraint, for self-restraint is a characteristic of true

love, whether human or Divine. Therefore *practise self-restraint in preaching*. It is not easy, especially for us who are young. Before my ordination, I was given some time—a fortnight or more—in which to compose a sermon. When I brought the sermon to the Bishop's chaplain he was very kind. But he made an observation which kept me from ever preaching that discourse. "There is an old saying," he remarked, "that a young man puts all the theology he knows into his first sermon." Since I tore up that first sermon I have tried hard to act on the chaplain's kindly hint. I have clipped and pruned my sermons unmercifully. It has been a painful task, cutting off the finest passages because they interfere with the growth of the main argument. But it is an indispensable task. You must practise rigid self-restraint. You must work out one point, and only one, in a sermon; work that out well. Let no one—not even that restless schoolboy or that gossiping old woman from the almshouse—have any doubt as to the reason why you preached your sermon. Leave one idea, and only one, to haunt the mind and conscience of your hearers. Again, if you are a wise man, you will clip and prune not only the sermon as a whole but almost every sentence in it. You will cut away long words and needless epithets. You will not employ the superlative degree when you might use the positive. You will practise an austere simplicity of style. The result will be a gain in power—a gain because there is a reserve force behind, and your people see that you feel more strongly than you speak. As you love your audience, as you wish to help them by your words, practise self-restraint. Once again remember, "To address men well, they must be loved much".

And now I have done. Forgive me if I have been

simple. I thought it right to be at such a solemn time. May God give you grace to take heed to yourselves, your prayers, your visiting, your teaching; and to love those whom He has entrusted to your care, that "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye" may "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away".



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